



School of Geosciences

Postgraduate Research Students

Procedural Guide and Handbook

Academic session 2022- 2023

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Introduction

Postgraduate research students are important and highly valued members of the School of Geosciences. They may be registered for Higher Degrees in Archaeology, Geography and Geology, Geosciences and Planetary Sciences and indeed with many other interdisciplinary foci. Research can be a solitary, and sometimes a lonely process, which is why support from the research community within the School, both staff and students, contributes significantly to successful completion of a research degree.

In terms of its relationship with postgraduate research students, the School's goals are:

- to promote the expertise and professional development of every postgraduate research student
- to encourage their full integration into the life of the School

Professional development is achieved primarily through the evolution of one's skills training and research activity. Initially this development is likely to be focused around interaction with supervisors but as your research develops further professional development will be gained through association with other researchers both within and out with the School. Postgraduates are expected to affiliate themselves with relevant professional and research organisations and to participate in conferences and other research activities taking place inside and outside the University of Aberdeen. Professional development is also fostered by completing a programme of generic skills training. There are a number of active research seminar series across the School and postgraduates are expected to attend. Students should not be afraid to push themselves beyond their area of study, you never know where the next idea comes from! Furthermore, we also encourage research students to undertake some (paid) part-time teaching as demonstrators and tutors, where possible, for undergraduate courses during the course of their studies. Formal training for these duties is provided by the University.

The formal integration of research students into the administrative structure of the School is achieved via the School Postgraduate Committee, a forum whereby postgraduates may bring relevant matters to the attention of the School Management, via the research student representative. In addition, separate Student-Staff Liaison Committees are held for the research students in St Mary's and Meston.

We hope that research students feel at home and have a successful and enjoyable research career in the School.



Dr David Muirhead
Head of School of Geosciences

1. Introduction to postgraduate study and the nature of PhD and MSc. by research theses

The School of Geosciences places great value on the contribution made to the School by our postgraduates both in academic and social matters.

Postgraduate research is very demanding of time and resources, both on the part of the students and on the part of the School and its staff, so we want to maximise the benefits on both sides. The School is committed to provide high quality guidance in academic and procedural matters, so that after their studies are completed research students leave Aberdeen having obtained both a valuable qualification and skills training that will stand them in good stead for their future career. For the School and its staff, it is important that we have the commitment of our students to ensure efficient output of top quality and motivated graduates, so we retain our reputation and we continue to attract highly capable applicants to our postgraduate school.

We place a high priority on ensuring that the research undertaken by research students meets high academic standards and the requirements and expected standards of our clients, sponsors and grant-awarding bodies. It is important that student research projects conducted in the School are finished on time.

Research students in the School may undertake the following degrees: Master of Science by research – MSc by research (12 months full-time/ 24 months part-time) or Doctor of Philosophy – PhD (at least 36 months full-time/ 72 months part-time). The requirements of the different research degrees are outlined below.

What is a PhD Thesis?

The PhD thesis is the culmination of at least 36 months full-time (or 72 months part time) research. The author of a thesis is, among other things, proving that they can conduct research, is capable of independent and critical thought, can see the work in relation to the work of others and can provide a significant contribution to knowledge.

A thesis is always expected to display a satisfactory degree of originality. For example, a candidate may have posed an important new problem or have addressed an existing problem in a novel and useful way (e.g. using an innovative methodological approach). The research for the thesis may have investigated previously ignored material or offered new significant insights about issues which have been examined by other researchers. A candidate may have developed new techniques for investigating issues or may have applied appropriate techniques to a new set of problems.

The thesis could take the form of a **traditional presentation of the work** undertaken or be a coherent collection of papers already published/submitted to journals by the candidate while registered at the University (“**PhD with publications**”). In the latter case, the candidate must make it clear which sections of the thesis are based on published material and how much individual responsibility the candidate has for any jointly authored work. Such material must be properly and stylistically incorporated into the thesis. Published work should therefore be introduced and linked with each other, thus forming part of a consistent argument(s) that run through the thesis. An overall introduction and conclusion are also recommended.

What is an MSc by Research?

The MSc. by Research requires a shorter period of study (12 months full-time / 24 months part time). The actual standard of the work presented in the thesis should be comparable to PhD, although the amount of work will be commensurate to the period of study. Originality and publishability are important, and many MSc theses have direct applicability since they are focused

on a narrowly defined topic. The essential requirements for these degrees are that they address themselves in a disciplined manner to a specific topic, theme or phenomenon; they comprise a thorough, well researched, mature and original treatment.

MSc by Research students undertake a research project under the guidance of an academic supervisor and, unlike a postgraduate taught degree by coursework and dissertation, there are no formal lectures or seminars and work is not formally examined until after the final thesis is submitted.

Potentially a MSc by Research or a MPhil degree may be awarded as a compensatory award for those that fail to satisfy examiners in their PhD viva.

Plagiarism:

Your attention is drawn to the University statement on plagiarism, which is defined in the Academic Quality Handbook under Code of Practice on Student Discipline:

<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/students/academic-life/study-resources-3379.php#panel3954>

Plagiarism is the use, without adequate acknowledgement, of the intellectual work of another person in work submitted for assessment. A student cannot be found to have committed plagiarism where it can be shown that the student has taken all reasonable care to avoid representing the work of others as his or her own.

To avoid the occurrence of plagiarism, the thesis will be submitted to Turnitin prior to being submitted to the University and must pass their requirements before it can be submitted.

2. Overview of the management of postgraduate research

The management of postgraduate research is considered at three levels: the University; the School; and the home discipline of the students. Broadly speaking, the management of postgraduate research in the School of Geosciences is standardised, particularly in terms of progression requirements – see section 3. There are, however, some discipline-specific requirements for research students, the most important of which are outlined in section 4.3.

2.1 University management of postgraduate research

Formal registration, payment of fees and registration with the Directorate of Digital and Information Services

A ‘Joining Instructions’ document is sent to new students by the Student Recruitment and Admissions Service and contains information about electronic registration, how to collect student ID card and the procedures for becoming a registered user of the University’s electronic resources and the library.

Induction

The University has an induction programme run by the Post Graduate Research School, for all new research students in October (for students who start their degree in September/October) and in February/March (for students who start their degree after November). All new postgraduate research students, full and part-time are expected to attend induction. An induction session in each discipline is held as part of the induction programme.

Changes to terms of study

Any requests for a change in the terms of study, for example, a request to suspend studies, to extend the period of supervised study or to study off-campus, must be approved centrally by the University via the Post Graduate Research School. The forms required to make changes to the terms of study request are available through the Infohub

<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/study/changes-to-studies.php>

Attendance, illness, absence and holidays

There are no set hours of work or holidays. Considerable flexibility and dedication are required for successful research and research students might find themselves working long hours at some points of their research degree. Students should keep their supervisor informed of their movements, for example, by informing them of any periods of fieldwork away from Aberdeen or holidays. T4 students need to fill in the appropriate request for absence form and have this signed by their supervisor. If students are unwell, they should phone the office and inform them that they will not be in work. If students are off work for more than seven working days, they should submit a medical certificate to the School Office.

It is important that the University is aware of any problems which might impede progress. **It is the student's responsibility to ensure that both the supervisor and the Geosciences PGR administrator are aware of any illness or other difficulty that has affected their ability to study and that appropriate documentation (for example, medical certificate) is made available.**

2.2 School based management of postgraduate research

The day-to-day management of postgraduate research is the responsibility of supervisors. The supervisors appointed to each research student are responsible for regularly advising and guiding the student in the selection of research training, the formulation and execution of the research proposal and, ultimately, the submission of the thesis. The frequency of supervision meetings is flexible, varying with the stage of the research. Generally, meetings are held every two weeks in the first year of study and every three or four weeks in the second year.

Two (or more) supervisors will be allocated at the beginning of the study and will normally continue to advise throughout the duration of the project. However, supervisory requirements may change as a student's research interests evolve. In these circumstances requests will be considered for a change of supervisor(s). Supervision will normally be carried out on a joint basis to ensure an agreed programme of study and to avoid the risks of ambiguous or conflicting advice. Joint supervision also ensures that if one supervisor is away from Aberdeen (for example, conducting research) the student should continue to have access to an on-campus supervisor.

Relationship between students and their supervisor(s)

The relationship between students and supervisors is viewed as a key ingredient to the successful completion of a research thesis and it is essential that all parties put effort into the relationship and clarify expectations. There is help available to students who have a specific issue with their supervisor. Firstly, it is recommended that the student attempt to address the issue by discussing it directly with the supervisor. When this is not possible or does not lead to improvement, the student can contact the second supervisor. If the problem needs to be escalated, then the next port of call would be the PGR coordinator for the student's discipline. PGR coordinators oversee research student admissions and keep a watching brief on the overall progress and welfare of research students. There are also student representatives in the School who could provide further help. Should the issue be not resolved at that stage, then it is recommended that the student contact the

PGR Director for the School. Beyond that is the Head of School and, ultimately, the student support services (e.g. University Counselling Service).

Completion of the Thesis

All students should aim to complete and submit their thesis within their period of supervised study (normally 36 months). The University allows, on application, a further 12 months *extension period*. Permission to submit after the extension period has ended can only be requested if circumstances are **well justified**. The University's expectation is that **all full-time** PhD theses be submitted no more than **48 months** after the date of first registration. Extension period students are required to pay a registration fee to retain access to University facilities such as the library and e-resources.

Provision of facilities (workspace in the School, computer etc.) will terminate at the end of the period of supervised study (normally a maximum of 48 months). Any need for extra time to complete writing-up should be identified by the student (in consultation with the project supervisors) at the 2½ year mark and a detailed request submitted in writing to the Post Graduate Research School not later than 3 months before termination of the supervised study period in order that a formal application for an extension period can be made. **The School is under no obligation to provide office space, a computer and access to other School facilities if a student has entered the extension period.**

On completion of their studies students are expected to clear their office and laboratory space. There is no obligation on the School to store/forward any items left in PGR offices and laboratories once a student has left. Similar arrangements are in place for students completing MSc by research and MPhil by research degrees, on a pro-rata basis that reflects the length of their period of supervised study.

Student staff liaison committee and postgraduate research student representation on School Committees

There is a postgraduate student representative for PGR students for each discipline, in the School. This representative attends the School Postgraduate Committee meetings. This committee meets twice a year and provide an opportunity for research students to raise any issues of concern from the PGR student body. The PGR representative should make themselves known to the student body and arrange to table items of concern to the above-mentioned committee.

2.3 Discipline specific management of postgraduate research

Human Geography research students: transfer from MRes to PhD

Research students commencing a PhD in Human Geography who have not previously completed a Master of Research or equivalent training are required to complete a formal programme of research training in Year 1 of their registration. The formal programme is determined once a training needs assessment has been conducted and may require students to complete a selection/all of the modules offered on the Master of Research in Human Geography degree programme. The programme of training followed is designed to ensure that every student is equipped with the core research skills expected of all social science doctoral candidates by the UK Economic and Social Research Council. Some students are admitted for the degree of MRes in the first instance and upon successful completion of that programme transfer to a higher research degree at the end of their first year. Normally those who have already undertaken appropriate research training at a postgraduate level, or who are exempted from the MRes due to workplace research experience, may be registered at the outset for an MSc by research with a view to transfer to PhD.

Final decisions regarding upgrading to PhD are taken once all marks for the MRes or components thereof are known OR when the supervisory team and a progress review panel has been satisfied that the student is working at doctoral level (normally about 9 months after commencing their

study). If an earlier assessment of progress is required, for example, to secure continuing funding, a provisional judgement will be made by the supervisors and the progress review panel. Students who successfully complete an approved combination of 60 credits worth of core research training from the MRes programme may be awarded a Postgraduate Certificate in Research Methods in Human Geography.

3. School of Geosciences Postgraduate Research Students Progression Arrangements

Assessment for a research degree ultimately depends on an examination of the thesis and its defence in the presence of a panel of examiners appointed by the University. However, progress will be monitored, at School level, and **where progress is unsatisfactory the University has the right to terminate a student's candidature for a research degree**. Details are described below under PGR Monitoring. An overview of the monitoring process can be found at <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/pgrs/monitoring-progression/index.php>

The progression arrangements for the School of Geosciences outlined below apply to **all** students registered for a research degree in the School but will not replace the University requirement that six-monthly Research Student Assessment Forms are completed (see below under Routine Monitoring). Students who are co-supervised at the James Hutton Institute may elect to follow either the School of Geosciences or the James Hutton Institute progress review requirements, but if the latter is chosen they are still required to give a formal research presentation to the School as part of the transition between year 1 and 2 and between year 2 and 3 and complete the progression paperwork at the end of years 1 and 2.

Initial progress: at the end of the 3rd month of full-time registration (pro-rata part-time) students in discussion with their supervisors should have completed their Initial Personal Development Plan form, which will be emailed to students and supervisors at the appropriate time by the PGR School.

Routine Monitoring: there are two elements of routine progression monitoring:

- Element 1: students must fill out a routine monitoring form, usually every 6 months.
- Element 2: is governed by the School and is described below.

Progression during Year 1

Besides the submission of the (i) 3rd month Personal Development Form and the (ii) 6th month Research Student Routine Progress Review Form, by the end of the 9th month of full-time registration (pro-rata part-time) every research student in the School of Geosciences should have:

- (iii) submitted a **progress report** (no more than 3500 words) to the PGR administrator (pgr-geosciences@abdn.ac.uk) who will forward it to the progression panel. The panel is assigned to students when they commence their studies and comprises two members of academic staff, one of whom is from the students' discipline (an "expert"). The **progress report** will include a summary of the PhD student research activities since commencing their degree, an introduction to their research project and research questions and how is the student planning to answer these, an outline of the scope of their study, and an account of the development of their methodology. A work plan for the next 12 months and a brief account of planned research training activities (generic, discipline specific and specialist) should be included in the progress report. Students may wish to append other written work, such as a draft literature review, to their progress report, but there is no expectation that advisory panel members will be able to read it. The panel will read the report and will seek to confirm that the student has:

- developed an understanding of their research problem (what are the key research question/s?) and achieved sufficient background knowledge to proceed with their research;
- acquired familiarity with, and understanding of, literature relevant to their research topic and wider research area and can identify work of significance to their research;
- demonstrated a capacity to conduct their research project;
- developed an ability to appraise research problems critically;
- successfully completed research training as agreed with the supervisory team, if applicable to the first 9 months of the PhD
- developed a good research plan for the following 12 months

Upon receiving the report, the panel will complete a progression form and return this to the PGR administrator (pgr-geosciences@abdn.ac.uk). If the panel is content with the student's progress the student will be confirmed as on track for a PhD. If any serious concerns about the student's progress are identified the student will be required to (i) attend a meeting to discuss possible ways forward with the panel and the supervisor(s), and (ii) submit an updated report within two months. If the resubmitted report is deemed to be unsatisfactory, the panel might recommend the student to move to a degree of MSc by research. Alternatively, the student will be requested to withdraw from study. Please note that in cases where students have elected to go through the progress monitoring of other institutions their form must also be completed.

Progression during Year 2

Besides the submission of the 12th and 18th month Research Student Routine Progress Review Form, by the end of the 21st month of registration (pro-rata part-time) students should have:

- Attended the **School of Geosciences PGR Conference**, where they will present their work and project via a poster.
- Submitted a progress report (of no more than 3500 words) to the PGR administrator (pgr-geosciences@abdn.ac.uk) who will forward it to the progression panel. The report will explain the research activities undertaken over the previous 12 months. The report should include enough information to allow the advisory panel to understand the significance of the research, methodology, initial findings as well as next steps. Notably, the student should note any changes to their project (as outlined in their previous progress report at month 9). A work plan for the next 12 months, and any information regarding conference and seminar attendance etc. over the previous 12 months should be appended to the report. Copies of draft chapters, conference papers/posters, working papers (or other documents that illustrate progress), could be submitted as attachment, but there is no expectation that advisory panel members will be able to read it. Following the submission of the report, the student will be required to attend a viva with the progression panel. The student will be informed about the viva date. During the viva, the student will be required to give a 10 minute presentation on their research, which will be followed by a discussion on the report. Following the progress review interview the advisory panel will complete the 21 month Assessment Form and return it to the PGR administrator (pgr-geosciences@abdn.ac.uk). Upon receiving the report, the panel will complete a progression form and return this to the PGR administrator (pgr-geosciences@abdn.ac.uk). If the panel is content with the student's progress the student will be confirmed as on track for a PhD. If any serious concerns about the student's progress are identified the student will be required to (i) attend a meeting to discuss possible ways forward with the panel and the supervisor(s), and (ii) submit an updated report within two months. If the resubmitted report is deemed to be unsatisfactory, the panel might recommend the student to move to a degree of MSc by research. Alternatively, the student will be requested to withdraw from study. Please note that in

cases where students have elected to go through the progress monitoring of other institutions their form must also be completed.

Progression during year 3 / writing up

Besides the submission of the (i) 24th and 30th month Research Student Routine Progress Review Form, at the beginning of Year 3, students are expected to (ii) deliver an oral presentation at the

School of Geosciences PGR Conference.

By the end of the full-time registration (pro-rata for part-time students) students will submit to the Graduate School a Thesis Completion Form, part of the 6 monthly routine monitoring process, which should include a detailed timetable for the completion of their thesis.

If the supervisors' consider that the student is on track to submit within the period of supervised study or within the writing up period, no further action will be taken.

If there are any concerns about the student's ability to complete within the normal period of supervised study (36 months), a meeting will be held at which progress will be discussed and a realistic, detailed timetable for completion within the writing up period (year 4) will be agreed. A formal note of this meeting will be made.

If applicable, the same process will be followed at the month 42nd and 48th month of full-time registration. If the thesis has not been submitted by the end of the 12th month of the writing up period (48 months) a further progress review will be instigated, following the same procedure described above.

4. Postgraduate Research Students, Research Training and Personal and Professional Development (Personal Development Plans)

Being a research student is not simply about producing and processing data and writing a thesis. Doing a research degree requires the development of many skills, including personal, career and professional development skills as well as skills directly related to the topic you are studying, namely developing your knowledge about and ability to use a range of research methods and analytical techniques. Professional development also encompasses participation in the intellectual and professional life of your discipline, the University and the wider academic community.

While some skills can be learnt and honed through personal experience, others are learnt in a more structured manner. To ensure that these skills are developed, formal research, personal and professional development training is now considered to be essential for ALL postgraduate research students and post-doctoral researchers. Training courses may be taken at all stages of the PhD. Some training is specifically designed for new PGRs and some is most suitable for students in the middle of their research degree or in their final year. Research students in Human Geography follow training guidelines set out by the Economic and Social Research Council: these requirements apply to ALL research students in Human Geography, broadly defined, regardless of their source of funding or specific research topic.

Training in generic and transferable skills is provided by the University units, including the Directorate of Digital and Information Services and the Staff Development Unit. Attendance at these and other relevant training and skills development courses comprise part of each research

student's Personal Development Plan. Further, specialist skills training may take place out with the University.

4.1 The Researcher Development Framework (RDF)

The Research Development Programme (RDP) <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/pgrs/training-development/index.php> is a major UK-wide approach to researcher development, which aims to enhance our capacity to build the UK workforce, develop world-class researchers and build our research base.

The RDF describes the knowledge, behaviours and attitudes of researchers and encourages them to aspire to excellence through achieving higher levels of development. It will be invaluable for planning, promoting and supporting the personal, professional and career development of researchers in higher education.

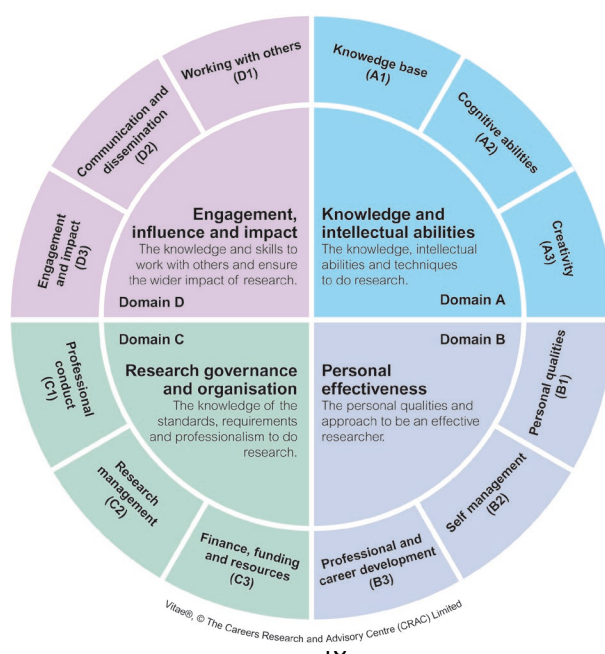
The framework is designed for:

- researchers within higher education to evaluate and plan their own personal, professional and career development
- managers/supervisors of researchers in their role supporting the development of researchers
- trainers, developers, human resources specialists and careers advisors in the planning and provision of support for researchers' development.

It will also be of interest to employers in identifying the benefits of employing researchers, individuals interested in training as a researcher, and researchers looking to move into higher education from other sectors. Policymakers, funders of researchers and other stakeholders will find the associated Researcher Development Statement (RDS) a useful strategic overview of the RDF.

The RDF supports the implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, the QAA Code of practice for research degree programmes (www.qaa.ac.uk) and the 'Roberts' recommendations for postgraduate researchers and research staff.

The diagram below summarises the types of skills early career researchers, including PhD students, should develop.



4.2 Personal and Professional Development Courses offered by the Institution

The Skills for Research Excellence Programme

The Skills for Research Excellence Programme has been specially designed to offer PhD students training opportunities in generic skills with the aims of helping them to complete their research project successfully and on-time, and of enhancing student's employability once they have graduated. The Post graduate Research School acts as a portal for all the information you need about PDPs, generic skills and the courses on offer at the University of Aberdeen, is available <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/students/new-students/postgraduate-research>

This programme is designed to deliver training in the skills identified in the Researcher Development Framework. A range of courses have been incorporated that cover the principal generic areas of **personal effectiveness, communication skills, networking & team building, and career management** which have been identified by the Research Councils as key areas in which PhD students should receive additional training.

Most of the courses are just one or two hours long although others last for a morning or afternoon or are one or two-day courses. All are held on campus and are FREE to all PhD students registered at the University of Aberdeen. Some have only limited places available because they are interactive workshops. Early booking is recommended.

Choosing which courses to take and registration

Details of courses run by the Postgraduate Research School which are available for students to take can be found at <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/pgrs/training-development/index.php>. Having looked at what is available, you should consider which areas you would most benefit from training in at this stage in your PhD. Some indication of the suggested appropriate year a course might be taken in is given, but this is only indicative information. You should feel free to seek further advice on this from your PhD supervisors. Discussion with your peers may also help identify the courses which may be of greatest benefit.

The Directorate of Digital and Information Services and the Library offer courses in

additional to those described above. Research students are welcome to attend any of the short courses offered by DDIS <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/it/services/training/courses.php> and the Library. Courses provided by DDIS include, for example: MS Office suite - Access, PowerPoint, Excel and Word. Courses offered by CAD include, for example: Presenting at conferences; Small group teaching; Learning styles; and The Learning and Teaching Support network (LTSN). Programmes are published for each half session on the web. If you wish to attend a training course, please check with your supervisor whether you should attend before booking because participants are often charged for attending, normally this charge is met by the School.

4.3 Postgraduate Research Training in Human Geography

The training requirements of Human Geography research students follow the requirements of the Economic and Social Research Council. Geography and Environment is currently part of the Human Geography pathway of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded Scottish Graduate School of Social Science Doctoral Training Centre and will be a member of the successor Doctoral Training Partnership from September 2017. The generic training requirements of Human Geography research students are largely met through training courses delivered by Aberdeen University. Additional, subject specific, training is offered through the Doctoral Training

Centre. The most substantial course is the **Advanced Research Training in Human Geography** residential training course delivered by the Human Geography pathway, a consortium of the Scottish Geography departments. At the end of the first and second year of registration **Human Geography** students will attend the **Advanced Research Training for Human Geographers** residential course. This course is organised and delivered by academic staff from all the Scottish Universities' Geography Departments. The course content is responsive to student identified training needs and the topics covered vary from year to year. The course takes place each September at the Kindrogan Field Centre, Perthshire and its overarching objective is to provide students with an opportunity to gain advanced level expertise in conducting human geographical research.

The Scottish Graduate School of Social Science runs an annual Summer School that Human Geography research students are strongly encouraged to attend.

4.4 Advanced Research Training (Years Two and Three of a PhD)

Training and skills development are not simply an activity for first year research student. Some skills sessions, such as preparing for your viva and research grant application overviews, are best taken in years two or three. The School of Geosciences therefore expects all full-time second and third year research students, and part-time students where possible, to attend and participate fully in courses such as those outlined above and in the following activities:

Departmental research seminars

All research students are expected to attend research seminars, from the selection available across the School, and attend research presentations given by guests as and when they arise. Research students should also attend, where appropriate, research seminars held in other departments across the University and in partner institutions such as the James Hutton Institute, the Centre for Environmental Hydrology (Banchory) and the Scottish Agricultural College (Craibstone, Aberdeen).

Delivering formal research seminars and conferences

Formal presentations are given by all year 2 students as part of progress monitoring requirements. All research students are encouraged to attend and deliver posters / papers at **academic conferences** out with the School.

Language Skills

The Language Centre is responsible for providing academic guidance and support on matters relating to English as a Foreign Language and on the teaching and learning of Modern Foreign Languages in general.

For students whose first language is not English, the Centre provides academic support in the form of one-to-one consultations and English Language workshops and short courses. These services are widely publicised around the university during term-time and students can sign up for as many courses as they feel they need. The Centre also runs a range of pre-university English Language Foundation Programmes and a 1-month intensive pre-sessional programme in English for Academic Purposes.

In addition to the services described above, the Language Centre provides a range of other services. Registered students from the university may access these resources free of charge and receive support and friendly advice on language learning from the Centre's team of dedicated staff.

Contact: The Language Centre: <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/study/international/english-language-programme-269.php>

5. Part-time teaching opportunities

All research students are encouraged to undertake some part-time teaching during the course of their research degree, where possible. As well as providing an opportunity to develop generic and transferable skills, demonstrating, tutoring and assisting on field classes this provides an opportunity to earn money over and above that which is paid via a studentship.

Part-time teaching in the School of Geosciences has been classified as follows:

- **Student Assistance: Tutoring:** leading tutorial or workshop groups.
Equates to Grade 5, the appointment is at spinal point 24
- **Demonstrating:** assistance in, for example, laboratory classes
Equates to Grade 5, the appointment is at spinal point 24

Training and Support for PhD Tutors and Demonstrators

Many PhD students complete tutoring or demonstrating at some point during their postgraduate studies. Undertaking teaching activities during your PhD is a fantastic way to develop your employability skills such as communication, problem solving and time management. Whether or not you plan to stay in higher education after your PhD, the skills you develop through teaching students are highly valued by external organisations and universities alike. Supporting the learning of students can also be extremely rewarding, and of course, you are paid for your time. The Centre for Academic Development (CAD), in partnership with the Postgraduate Research School, provides training and support for postgraduate research students (PGRs) who teach. The training offered centrally is complemented by discipline-specific support at academic School or subject-level. The University's four-stage **Postgraduate Demonstrating & Tutoring Framework** outlines the teaching development available for PhD students who teach.

MS: AH0621 Introductory Teaching Workshop September 2021

Stage 1: Undertaking the Preparing to Teach in Higher Education resource and its associated short, online assessment in MyPGR, an organisation in MyAberdeen.

Stage 2: Participating in a School-specific introductory demonstrating or tutoring session delivered by CAD. This introductory session must be completed by all postgraduate researchers before undertaking teaching duties at the University. It includes online tutoring advice and guidance.

Stage 3: Reviewing PGR tutoring/demonstrating practice through peer observation of teaching.

Stage 4: Completing CAD's continuing professional development 6-week online course, Principles of Learning & Teaching in Higher Education. This is externally accredited by Advance HE and may be undertaken by PGRs with sufficient teaching experience, usually one year. For further information regarding the roll-out of the Framework across the University, contact the Centre for Academic Development at cad@abdn.ac.uk

A PGR who assists on a **fieldtrip**, in addition to receiving free travel, board and lodgings, will be paid for 3 hours assistance for a full day in the field. If you are away from home on a field trip at a location that does not provide meals, you may claim the expenses you incur for lunch or dinner according to the University guidelines for staff expenses. The School of Geosciences does not expect fieldtrip assistants to undertake any marking directly associated with the fieldtrip.

If you are invited to teach, your contribution will be formally described as tutoring or demonstrating. You will then be assigned to the appropriate point within the pay grade for the type of work you will undertake.

Duties and remuneration associated with demonstrating

Classroom contact remuneration: you are paid for the length of time you are in the class (i.e. if a lab class is timetabled for 2 hours you will be paid for 2 hours classroom contact).

Out of class contact time: The School of Geosciences does not expect demonstrators to be available to students for out of class contact time consultation.

Marking: The School of Geosciences does not expect demonstrators to mark students work.

Duties and remuneration associated with tutoring

Tutoring involves classroom contact, preparation, out of class contact with students and marking.

Classroom contact remuneration: you are paid for the length of time you are in the class (i.e. if a tutorial is timetabled for 2 hours you will be paid for 2 hours classroom contact).

Preparation time remuneration: tutors work with pre-prepared material but are required to have read all materials supporting the class in advance. You will be paid $\frac{1}{2}$ an hour preparation for each hour of classroom contact (i.e. for every 2 hours session in class you will be paid 1 hour preparation). Note: if you take 2 classes on the same tutorial topic you will only be paid **one** block of preparation time.

Out of class contact time: if you are required to be available to students out with class time, you will be paid for 3 hours out of class contact per tutorial group per half session.

Marking: some disciplines require tutors to mark assignments and exemption exam papers. The rate of pay for marking is 4 scripts per hour (i.e. if you have a class of 12 students you will receive 3 hours pay for marking each assignment the group submits). A minimum payment of 3 hours marking per group will be paid. The normal tutorial/ workgroup size is 12 students but if a group exceeds this number an additional marking payment (at the rate of 4 scripts to be marked per hour) will be made.

Research students who would like to be considered for teaching activities should email SAO Ann Simpson (a.simpson@abdn.ac.uk). They must complete some paperwork and undertake 2 Equality and Diversity online modules *before* they can teach – if this paperwork is not completed, they are not covered by Employers Liability Insurance and are not permitted to teach, let alone be paid.

6. Resources for Postgraduate Research Students

6.1 Facilities in St Mary's and Meston buildings

Room allocation

Office accommodation for postgraduate research students is in shared rooms within St Mary's and the Meston buildings. Students are provided with a desk, a laptop, space in a desk cabinet and shelving space. Students may be required to move rooms during their time at University of Aberdeen.

Keys

All research students are issued with a key to their room. A deposit will be requested for the key, which will be returned when key is handed back. The PGR Admin Co-ordinator must be informed **immediately** if the key is lost.

Security

Research students are advised to keep rooms locked when empty and on no account to leave purses, wallets or other valuables lying around. The main doors of most University buildings are locked at 6pm and care must be taken to ensure that they remain locked after that time. Research Students, using their ID card at the swipe access point may enter the buildings after 6pm, with permission from Head of School, **but note that no-one may access the Meston building after 11pm** (when the doors are double locked). To request access to either St Mary's or Meston buildings contact the PGR administrator for Geosciences.

In case of an emergency, at any time, ring University Security on extension 3939.

Health and Safety

The University of Aberdeen operates a **no smoking policy** in all buildings. All students should note the exits from their rooms, the location of fire alarms and the position of fire extinguishers in their building. If you hear the fire alarm immediately collect your coat and valuables, close the door of the room after you and proceed to the assembly point. If medical attention is required, take the casualty to the Accident and Emergency Department at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, Foresterhill. In the Meston building access to labs is by key holders only. Only non-hazardous work may be carried out outside normal office hours. <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/working-here/health-and-safety-308.php>, <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/working-here/safezone.php>

Mail

Postgraduate research students are collectively allocated a pigeon-hole/mail box. All external mail should have the appropriate departmental stamp on it, or the appropriate Royal Mail stamp should be affixed. Please collect your mail on a regular basis.

Photocopying

Copyright Laws must be adhered to, an up-to-date copy is posted above most photocopiers. Students in both St Mary's and Meston have access to the networked photocopier – printer – scanner (this works on a swipe-card system – use your student ID card). Use of the photocopier / printer is monitored. If your use is considered excessive you may be required to pay for some or all of your printing. Please ensure you make yourself familiar with copy right information <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/library/support/copyright-216.php>

Computing facilities

Each research student should have exclusive access to a laptop at their desk which is networked to the central university system. A wide range of software may be accessed via this network. All computers are linked to the University network for access to the Internet and email. Specific software requirements will be addressed in liaison with individual supervisors.

All students have access to personal space on the central H drive which can be used to back-up files. Remember to make back-ups regularly. If you require large amounts of H drive space students should log a request for more disk space to the IT Servicedesk. However, H drive is for personal material, not for the thesis. The thesis and all its associated data should be held in network storage, currently in \\uoa\global\research projects\geosciences. Note it is the supervisor's responsibility to request a dedicated research folder in this environment via Servicedesk: servicedesk@abdn.ac.uk

The introduction of unauthorised personal software, games or other external material to departmental machines is prohibited. Unauthorised copying of programs or data from the hard disk or from program CD-ROMs is strictly prohibited.

Viruses spread very quickly through computer networks. They may be introduced through many formats, including, for example, CDs, flash drives or through emails and email attachments. It is important that you run a virus check regularly. All University machines have anti-virus software that is updated automatically on a regular basis. Please learn how to use this facility to ensure your computer remains virus free! You may set up your home laptop/pc so that you can use University electronic resources as a 'local' user (essential if you wish, for example, to access electronic journals from home). DIT has a fact sheet explaining how to set up your computer appropriately. All PhD students should complete the mandatory IT Security Awareness training <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/working-here/it-security.php#panel2858>

If an error or fault occurs when using a computer or a printer **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO FIX IT YOURSELF**. E-mail the Service Desk on servicedesk@abdn.ac.uk or log into MyITportal and report the fault.

6.2 Further support services for Postgraduate Research Students

Problems of an academic or personal nature are sometimes encountered by research students and there is plenty of help around. Your supervisor is an obvious starting point, and most problems associated with your time as a PhD student can easily be resolved in the School/Discipline. Your supervisors, PGR coordinator, Chair of the PG committee (**Dr Clare Bond**), or the Head of School (**Dr David Muirhead**) may be contacted about any problems you are experiencing. In the first instance, you should try to resolve any problems with your supervisor directly. If attempts fail, you should discuss the matter with your PGR coordinator (Prof Ian Alsop (Geology), Dr Jean-Christophe Comte (Geography), Dr Charlotta Hillerdal (Archaeology)).

The University offers a fairly comprehensive system of student support which is open to research as well as undergraduate students.

Postgraduate Registry and the Quality Assurance Committee

The Postgraduate Registry deals with all matters to do with your registration at the University, including the payment of fees, suspension of studies, applications to study off campus etc. It also oversees the examination of your thesis and will coordinate any academic appeals that may be made. You can contact the registry directly (Postgraduate@abdn.ac.uk).

Student Support Services

This is the umbrella organisation for various areas, including, University Counselling Service, University Chaplaincy, Warden staff and the Student Advisory Service. Full details about student support services can be found <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/support/advice.php> with information about the student support services most likely to be of relevance to research students noted below.

Advice

The student [Advice and Support Office](#) is an integrated office, located in Students Union, Elphinstone Road, whose staff includes:

- the Student Support Officer/Senior Disability Adviser
- the Disability Adviser
- the Assistant Disability Adviser
- the International Student Advisers
- the Student Support Adviser

The advice and information we offer is impartial and confidential; **Phone 01224 273935** for an appointment if you need to speak to a particular member of staff

Careers Service

There is a dedicated postgraduate research student and contract research student advisor in the Careers and Employability Service see <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/careers>

Child Care

Although there are no crèche facilities at the University, there is a registered Nursery for student and staff parents in the heart of Old Aberdeen for babies, toddlers and infants.

Rocking Horse Nursery: Tel: 01224 273400 or go to <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/rockinghorse/>

Appeals and Complaints Procedure

It is the policy of the University, at all times, to provide the highest possible level of service to its students. Nevertheless, it is recognised that there will be occasions when students may feel that the level of service, or the treatment they have received from staff, has fallen short of that normally expected, and that, in the case of an academic complaint, they have suffered a material disadvantage as a result.

Counselling

The Counselling Service offers free, confidential counselling with trained Counsellors and is open to all students and staff in the University. We also run a variety of workshops on topics such as, Stress and Relaxation, Assertiveness and Self-Confidence and Effective Helping.

Counselling Service: Tel: 01224 272139, email counselling@abdn.ac.uk, or <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/students/support/counselling-3635.php>

Information for Disabled Students

For general enquiries, the [Disability Advisers](#) at the University of Aberdeen can be contacted at:

Student Advice and Support Office, University of Aberdeen, The Hub, Elphinstone Road, Old Aberdeen AB24 3TU.

Tel: 01224 273935 : Email: student.disability@abdn.ac.uk

Emails sent to this address go directly to a Disability Adviser.

Financial Assistance

The University has limited funds to assist students who encounter “unexpected and/or exceptional financial difficulties”. Application forms for UK students are available from the Student Advice and Support Office, in the Students Union. Awards are small and the funds cannot meet the costs of tuition fees or maintenance. Overseas students have access to emergency assistance only and if experiencing a crisis are recommended to make an appointment with one of the International Officers. <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/students/support/money-matters-3400.php#panel3523>

Fitness

The University promotes the fitness of staff and students through sport and recreation. A comprehensive range of fitness instruction, life-style assessment and other services are available. Start your enquires: <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/study/student-life/sports-1688.php>.

Ultimate Questions

The University Chaplain is available to the whole community for people of all faiths and none. The [Chaplaincy Centre](#) will also provide you with details of denominational chaplains, chaplains for other faiths, and meeting and prayer facilities.

The University of Aberdeen Student’s Association (AUSA)

There is a postgraduate representative on the committee of the Student’s Association and research students may become members of any club or society affiliated to the Student’s Association.

6.3 Facilities for students with a disability

Within the University at large, provision has been made for students with disabilities. These include: priority access to computers in the Library; sound cards for speech synthesis; CD-ROM and library guide; TV with Teletext and an individual player; electronic reading machine and open book scanning; text enlargement software; permanent ramps; accessible toilets; designated car parking spaces; induction loops in lecture theatres.

Most of the specialised computing facilities are located at the University’s main library, the Sir Duncan Rice Library, which is committed to providing adequate access to resource material for all students. The Sir Duncan Rice Library has a dedicated Disability Officer. The University’s Support Services includes a designated Disability Advisor and there is a website with information advice and contacts for students with disabilities <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/disabilities/>

The historical site of the Old Aberdeen campus and the layout of some buildings means that access for students with mobility difficulties requires some careful planning in advance. Whilst improvements have been made, and are ongoing in other buildings, students with mobility difficulties are always encouraged to visit the campus before accepting a place to study, where at all possible, to establish their own opinions.

If your personal circumstances change during your period of registration you are encouraged to meet with the **Student Support Officer / Disabilities Advisor** to discuss your requirements.

7. Safety in the Field

Field safety is of paramount importance for all researchers in the School of Geosciences. Research Students should ensure that they have read and understood relevant publications about health and

safety / field safety and if they have any queries relating to these matters, they should discuss them with their supervisor or with Jan Walker (jan.walker@abdn.ac.uk).

7.1 Health and Safety guidance

ALL research students should ensure that they have read the School of Geosciences Health and Safety Handbook. <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/geosciences/documents/GeoHSHB2015-16.pdf>

For research students undertaking fieldwork see the School of Geosciences Fieldwork Handbook. https://www.abdn.ac.uk/geosciences/documents/GeoFWHB2021_2

Geosciences Health and Safety documents include *Mountain Safety - Basic Precautions, Guidance Notes on Fieldwork Safety* and *Safety on Unsupervised Field Projects*.

STUDENTS MUST ADHERE TO THE GUIDANCE AND INSTRUCTIONS CONTAINED IN THESE PUBLICATIONS.

7.2 Conducting Research Away from Aberdeen

Many research students in the School of Geosciences conduct their research away from the Institution. This ranges from day visits to more prolonged periods of activity in the field. Over and above the policies and procedures referred to above, students conducting fieldwork away from Aberdeen for longer than a week are expected to keep in regular contact with their supervisors, by phone or email wherever possible. All students in the field have access to the School during normal office hours and have 24 hour access to the University's emergency contact line.

Prior to departing for fieldwork, students must prepare a risk assessment report and lodge a copy with the admin office. Students must also ensure that they have read and understood the various health and safety publications recommended to them.

The University regularly offers first aid courses. It is advised that you complete one of these courses if your research will involve you being out in the field.

7.3 Students leaving the UK to conduct fieldwork

Students conducting research overseas must inform the Postgraduate Registry of the dates they will be out with the UK. The Registry may need to recalculate academic fees.

7.4 Tier 4

The UK Government's Home Office Tier 4 regulations apply to **all** international students. The University is required to regularly monitor international students. International students studying in the School of Geosciences are informed on an individual basis of the reporting and monitoring system that applies to them. Please note that all immigration/visa matters can only be discussed with an International Student Adviser and all fee issues must be directed to the Postgraduate Registry – members of School staff may not discuss these topics with any student.

8. Research Ethics

The University of Aberdeen's Advisory Group on Research Ethics and Governance (AGREG) has developed a [Research Governance Handbook](#) which provides information and direction to research staff and students on key issues in the area of research ethics, including ethical review, unacceptable research conduct and training in research ethics and governance.

All research students, *regardless of their research topic*, are obliged to conduct their research in an ethically appropriate manner.

All postgraduate research involving human participants is subject to internal (University) ethical review.

Information on Research Ethics and Governance, including the University's Research Ethics Framework, is available <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/research/ethical-approval-2780.php>.

9. Expenses procedure

The University has a Policy on Expenses and Benefits see

<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/working-here/finance-system-7271.php>

that all research students must adhere to. If you do not comply with the policy, you may not be reimbursed for expenses incurred. Please ensure that you have read the **travel expenses** section.

If you have any queries regarding how to proceed with making and paying for travel arrangements and claiming expenses incurred in research activities, please discuss the matter with your supervisors and Ann Simpson BEFORE booking travel etc.

10. Academic Quality Handbook

Post graduate students are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the Academic Quality Handbook. In particular Section 8: Research Students - which outlines the Code of Practice for PGR students and the University. <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/teaching/academic-quality-handbook-838.php>

APPENDIX 1: A List of Relevant Codes and Guidance

Appeals and Complaints

<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/teaching/appeals-and-complaints-6119.php>

Code of Practice on Conflicts of Interest – Staff and Students

<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/working-here/your-responsibilities-3690#panel6848>

Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Academic Quality Handbook Appendix 5:15)

<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/teaching/academic-quality-handbook-838.php>

Code of Practice for Research Students, Supervisors, Heads of School, Heads of Graduate School (Academic Quality Handbook Section 5, Appendix 5:4)

<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/teaching/academic-quality-handbook-838.php>

Data Protection Policy

<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/about/our-website/data-protection.php>

Disciplinary Procedures

<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/working-here/your-responsibilities-3690#disciplinary>

Ethics and Governance – University of Aberdeen Research Ethics Framework

<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/research/research-governance-304.php#panel6321>

Good Research Practice

<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/pgrs/pgr-handbook/index.php#panel425>

Monitoring and Progression Forms

<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/pgrs/monitoring-progression/index.php>

Registration – Changes to Studies

<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/study/changes-to-studies.php>

Staff and Office Hours

Head of School: Dr David Muirhead, (dmuirhead@abdn.ac.uk)

SAO: Mrs A Simpson, (a.simpson@abdn.ac.uk)

PGR Director: Dr Clare Bond, (Clare.bond@abdn.ac.uk)

PGR Co-ordinators: Archaeology: Dr Charlotta Hillerdal, (c.hillerdal@abdn.ac.uk)
Geography: Dr Jean-Cristophe Comte, (jc.comte@abdn.ac.uk)
Geology: Prof Ian Alsop, (ian.alsop@abdn.ac.uk)

PGR Administrator: Ms Julie Forbes, (pgr-geosciences@abdn.ac.uk)

Office hours: Admin Office: Mon-Fri, 9.00am-4.30pm
PGR Administrator: Mon-Fri, 8.45am-12.30pm