MASTERS BY RESEARCH
STUDENT HANDBOOK 2023/24

This handbook should be read in conjunction with the appendix for your department

Royal Holloway Doctoral School

Disclaimer

Contents

1   Introduction to the University

[Welcome message from Professor Dawn Watling, Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Postgraduate Research)](#)

The Royal Holloway MPhil / PhD student handbook provides a central source of information that you should refer to throughout your studies at Royal Holloway. You will find a range of useful information in the handbook including details about on-campus facilities and support services, as well University regulations, policies and procedures. The student handbook has been designed to answer queries that you may have at different times of the academic year, but also provide the contact details of services who will be able to provide further information and assistance should you require.

If there is anything that you cannot find, or if you have any suggestions to improve it, please do get in touch with us at doctoralschool@royalholloway.ac.uk.

2   Support and advice

2.1   The Doctoral School

The Royal Holloway Doctoral School brings together key aspects of research student life, aiming to ensure that research students are fully integrated as members of the University's research community and to provide you with opportunities to meet and share ideas and experiences across our six academic schools. The Doctoral School will support you throughout your student journey, ensuring availability of relevant contemporary research skills and employment training alongside the highest standards of administrative and pastoral support.

- [Discover what services the Doctoral School provides for you](#)
- [Contact the Doctoral School for advice and support](#)

2.2   Support within your academic school

Your supervisor or a member of your supervisory team should always be the first point of contact for any questions or concerns you may have about your programme of study or your research. In addition, the [School Director of PGR Education](#) exercises overall responsibility for the welfare and academic progress of the research students within your School, supported by [the Department PGR Leads](#).

For most non-academic-related queries, please contact the Doctoral School. However, for the following, please contact your [School helpdesk](#):

- Queries about study space within your School
- HR queries - for those of you teaching alongside your research
- [Submitting expenses](#) (unless techne, SeNSS or ISG CDT funded, in which case the Doctoral School deals with them)
- Ordering services / goods

2.3   Student Services Centre

The [Student Services Centre](#) (SSC) is located in the Emily Wilding Davison Building and provides

support for issues relating to non-academic matters and student life such as:

- [Replacement Student ID cards](#)
- [Travel concessions](#) including the 18+ Student Oyster Photocard
- Providing documentation

You can find a range of information on the [SSC website](#). If you can't find what you are looking for online, you can contact the team using the details below.

- Email: studentservices@royalholloway.ac.uk
- Visit: Ground Floor of the Emily Wilding Davison Building
- Phone: 01784 27 6641

[Find out more about the Student Services Centre](#)

2.4 PGR Peer Mentoring Scheme

The PGR Peer Mentoring Scheme has been set up to provide the opportunity for new researchers at Royal Holloway to benefit from informal peer-to-peer support from researchers who are in the later stages of their research degree.

[Find out more about the PGR Peer Mentoring Scheme](#)

2.5 Student Life Directorate – supporting you at Royal Holloway

Our Wellbeing teams are here to support you with your health and wellbeing and to help you have positive academic, personal and social experiences as a Royal Holloway research student. The department is comprised of a number of specialist teams who cover a broad spectrum of wellbeing support and guidance and advice on areas which can impact on your wellbeing.

- [Find out more](#)

2.5.1 *Supporting you with wellbeing guidance*

Our Wellbeing: Support & Guidance team of wellbeing advisers provides advice and guidance to all students on personal and emotional wellbeing, to assist them in maintaining a healthy balanced lifestyle and to support them throughout their studies towards submission of their research and graduation. The advisers encourage all members of our student and staff community to alert them to concerns or signs of vulnerability -in themselves and others- to enable proactive engagement with early intervention.

- Email: wellbeing@royalholloway.ac.uk
- [Find out more about wellbeing support](#)
- [Find out more about wellbeing for postgraduate researchers](#)

2.5.2 *Supporting you with your disability*

Our Wellbeing: Disability & Neurodiversity team are here to support all students who have disclosed a disability, long standing medical condition, specific learning difficulty or mental health condition. The disability and academic advisers will help co-ordinate the right support for you including liaising with your academic department and the Doctoral School, external providers or specialist support services, including adjustments for vivas.

To access our support you need to declare your disability and register with the team who will then work with you to implement appropriate support as soon as possible.

- Email: disability@royalholloway.ac.uk
- Find out more about Disability & Neurodiversity support

2.5.3 *Supporting you with your mental health*

Our Wellbeing: Mental Health team provide mental healthcare to students who require support in primary care. The team form a common point of entry for mental health triage, assessment and referral (where needed) onto specialist NHS or mental health services and can help in particular students with emerging mental health concerns.

- Email: mentalhealth@royalholloway.ac.uk
- Find out more about our mental health support

2.5.4 *Supporting you with your finances*

Our Wellbeing: Financial Advice team will assist with financial difficulties you may experience including support with extra financial assistance (Study Support Grant), short term loans, referrals to local Foodbanks, budgeting advice and a wide range of other financial enquiries. They aim to ensure your time at university is as financially stress-free as possible.

- Email: moneymatters@royalholloway.ac.uk
- Find out more about Financial Advice

2.5.5 *Supporting you as an international student*

Our Wellbeing: International Advice team are the first point of contact for international students about a range of support and wellbeing issues – including visa and immigration advice - and will ensure you are able to access the most appropriate services as required to support you living and studying in the UK. They also proactively work to foster an inclusive and welcoming community on campus for all including their Home Away from Home programme of events.

- Email: internationaladvice@royalholloway.ac.uk
- Find out more about the International Advice team

2.5.6 *Supporting you through counselling*

The Wellbeing: Counselling team are here to support you with your personal emotional and mental wellbeing. Emotional problems can get in the way of your studies and life in general. If you find yourself having difficulties, you may find it helpful to speak to one of our professionally trained counsellors. They work to the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions and are a BACP accredited service. To see a counsellor you will need to register with the service and can then book an appointment.

- Email: counselling@royalholloway.ac.uk
- Find out more about counselling

2.5.7 *Supporting you with your faith & spirituality*

The Wellbeing: Multifaith Chaplaincy team aim to support students and staff in building supportive

communities of faith, where fundamental questions can be explored and a deep personal search for meaning is encouraged. They are here to offer support to the whole university community. Whatever you believe, whatever your background, whoever you love, whatever your struggles or doubts, and wherever in the world you are, the Chaplains want to hear from you.

- Email: chaplaincy@royalholloway.ac.uk
- Find out more about the multi-faith chaplaincy

2.5.8   *Supporting you living in the local community*

For students who have chosen to live in the local area of Egham or Englefield Green the Wellbeing: Community work to support students so that we are all working together to maintain a harmonious, happy community. In addition, the SU Advice Centre team can provide you with guidance around private housing landlord and contract matters.

- Email: community@royalholloway.ac.uk
- Find out more

2.5.9   *Supporting you living in halls of residence*

For students who are living in university halls of residence the Hall Life team work to promote and lead a happy experience for you whilst living on campus. The team help you feel part of the Royal Holloway community through events, campaigns, and services to foster student engagement and positive experiences.

- Email: hall.life@royalholloway.ac.uk
- Find out more about living in halls of residence

2.5.10 *Supporting you with an active lifestyle*

Studies have shown that students who work-out work better and being physically active can help with your mental wellbeing too. Physical activity is for everyone, and experience is not a requirement. Whether you're looking to pick up a new sporting hobby, or you're always in the gym, there's something for everyone of all abilities and our teams will be happy to help you.

- Email: sportscentre@royalholloway.ac.uk
- Find out more about active lifestyle and sport opportunities

2.6   Bullying and harassment

We as a University want to ensure all postgraduate researchers feel safe and respected. As such, the University takes bullying and harassment seriously. Please view our dedicated page to find information on the processes and support available when dealing with this issue.

Find out more

2.7   Students' Union Advice Centre

The Students' Union Advice Centre is an independent, free and impartial service open to all students at Royal Holloway. The service is fully accessible online and while specialising in academic and housing advice, can offer guidance on just about everything.

Specifically for PGRs, the Advice Centre can provide help with appeals, complaints, misconduct and interrupting studies. If you need support from an advisor, get in touch with the Advice Centre at advice@su.rhul.ac.uk

- Phone: 01784 27 6700
- Email: advice@su.rhul.ac.uk

Find out more about the SU's Advice Centre

2.8   IT Service Desk

The IT Service Desk is here to support you with issues such as email access, connecting to CampusNet Wi-Fi, and making use of University printing facilities. The IT Service Desk is also available to provide advice and guidance on a range of more specific IT issues, should you experience any problems. They also offer a range of free software, including Microsoft Office 365, NVivo and SPSS.

- Online chat: rhul.ac.uk/it
- Phone: +44 (0)1784 414321
- Email: itservicedesk@royalholloway.ac.uk

Find out more about IT services

3   Facilities and resources

Please refer to the relevant department appendix for details on the facilities and resources within your department and school.

View the campus map here

3.1   The Library

The Library, which is housed in the Emily Wilding Davison Building, provides access to a wide range of digital resources for your research, most of which can be viewed both on and off campus, alongside an extensive collection of print resources. Royal Holloway theses are also available via EThOS.

- Email: library@royalholloway.ac.uk
- Find out more about the library, including opening hours

3.1.1   Research Support

The Research Support team in the library provides support on research information including copyright, Open Access publishing, Research Data Management and developing your research information profile. The team can also provide advice for meeting research funders' requirements regarding Open Access.

The Liaison Librarian for the Doctoral School is Eva Garcia Grau. She is a member of the Liaison Team, a team of expert librarians who provide support throughout the research information cycle, from searching and accessing information for articles, books and other outputs through to

submission of your PhD thesis. Your subject's [Information Consultant](#) can help you develop your research and referencing skills. You can also access [Subject Guides](#), where you can find details of resources and further support available to you through the Library.

3.1.2 *Cultural Services*

Research visits to Royal Holloway's archives and art collections can be booked by appointment.

Archives
The archives contain institutional records of Bedford and Royal Holloway Colleges from the 19th century to the present day, alongside personal papers of prominent individuals with links to both institutions as well as special collections, many of which relate to theatre history. The rare book collections can be searched via the [LibrarySearch](#).

You can [check our opening times](#), [search our archives and special collections catalogue](#) or contact archives@rhul.ac.uk to book an appointment.

Art collection
There is a rich collection of artworks including oil paintings, works on paper and sculpture from the Royal Holloway and Bedford College collections. By booking an appointment you can study the artworks and access the information in the curatorial files and the growing art reference book collection. During term-time there are open days in our Grade-1 listed Picture Gallery which houses Thomas Holloway's collection of paintings.

[Check out the opening times](#), search the art collection on [ArtUK](#), discover the [Picture Gallery open days](#), or contact artcollections@rhul.ac.uk to book an appointment.

The Culture Team are happy to support students seeking to use the collections in creative or cross-disciplinary projects. If you have an idea, you're welcome to get in touch.

3.1.3 *Access to other libraries*

If you cannot find the specific items that you require in the University library, you also have access to the following major research libraries.

Senate House Library
[Senate House Library](#) is the central library of the University of London providing access to a range of online resources, print collections, and study space. Membership is free for Royal Holloway students and staff.

[Find out more](#)

The British Library
The British Library is the national collection and holds print copies of all books published in the UK and Ireland, alongside an extensive collection from other countries. Before visiting, you can request a Reader Pass online. Royal Holloway theses are available via [EThOS](#), the British Library's electronic theses service which contains approximately 600,000 records of UK theses, many of which are available for immediate download of the full text.

SCONUL access scheme
Royal Holloway participates in this national university access scheme which allows students to use

other university libraries in the UK.

[Find out more on the Library's website](#)

3.2   Study space

Most Schools offer some dedicated study space for their postgraduate researchers. Please view your [department appendix](#) for more details or contact your [Department Postgraduate Lead](#) or [School Director of PGR Education](#) for more details.

The Library within the Davison Building contains study space available to students and researchers, with a dedicated PGR area, on the 2nd floor to the rear of the silent study space directly opposite the stairs. For the latest information on study space in the Library and how to access it, consult the [Library's intranet](#).

[Further details about study space for postgraduate researchers](#)

3.3   Careers and Employability Service

The University's [Careers Service](#) runs a number of industry themed weeks and a range of career development and employer-focused events during the academic year, including a careers fair in the Autumn term.

[One to one appointments](#) are available all through the year, where you can talk over your career ideas or get feedback on your CV, cover letter or application. One-hour practice interviews are also available to book, as well as a range of resources on the [Careers Moodle site](#).

The Careers Service also holds workshops over the academic year as part of the [Researcher Development Programme](#). The workshops cover academic and non-academic career development topics as well professional pathways beyond academia.

The University has also developed a new skills and employability framework called [CVstac](#), aimed at supporting students to reflect on, develop and articulate a range of transferable skills and attributes. Find out more on the dedicated [CVstac Moodle site.](#)

- Email: careers@royalholloway.ac.uk

[Find out more about how the Careers Service supports postgraduate researchers](#)

3.4   Computers

There are several open access PC Labs available on campus which you can use, and computers throughout the Library in the Emily Wilding Davison Building. For security reasons access to these PC Labs is restricted at night and at weekends by a door entry system operated via your Student ID Card.

[Find out more](#)

3.5   Photocopying and printing

Copier-printers (MFDs) for students are located in the Library, the Computer Centre and many PC

labs, which will allow you to make copies in either black and white or colour.

[Find out more](#)

3.6 Parking on campus

- If you live more than 1.5 miles away from campus, you will be eligible to apply for a Student Parking Permit which covers days, evenings and weekends.
- If you live within the 1.5 miles radius, you can apply for a Student Out of Hours Parking Permit which means you can park from 6pm till 4am (you can only use car parks 4 and 14).

[Find out more about parking on campus and how to apply for a permit](#)

4 Communications

4.1 University email address

The University provides an email address for all students and stores the address in a University email directory known as the Global Address List. Your account is easily accessed on and off campus using this link: mail.live.rhul.ac.uk.

Your University email address is used both for routine and urgent communications, including correspondence from your supervisors, so it is vital that you check your emails regularly - at least daily.

Please do not ignore emails from the University. We will assume you have received an email within 48 hours (excluding Saturdays and Sundays).

4.2 Your contact details

It is imperative that the University has the most up-to-date contact details for you. Please ensure that you update the following via the Campus Connect student portal as quickly as possible once they are changed: your telephone number (mobile and landline), postal address (term-time and forwarding), email address and emergency contact details.

You can find out about how the University processes your personal data by reading the [Student Data Collection notice](#).

4.3 Doctoral School communications

The Doctoral School sends a [Researcher Newsletter](#) to your Royal Holloway email address once a fortnight. This provides details of events and opportunities for postgraduate researchers which are coming up in the following month, as well as updates on the research landscape.

Any email from the Doctoral School with important updates outside of the Researcher Newsletter will also be sent to your Royal Holloway email address so it is important that you check it regularly.

The [Doctoral School microsite](#) will keep you informed of news and events which may be of interest to you as a postgraduate researcher. It is also a key repository for information and advice on subjects such as funding, changes to your registration status and the examination process. It

provides you with easy access to a variety of documentation and guides that you may need during your studies.

You can also follow the Doctoral School on Twitter: @RHULDocSchool

5   Research skills and teaching

As a postgraduate researcher, you are expected to engage in your personal and professional development throughout your programme here at Royal Holloway. As part of our flagship Research Development Programme, you will be supported in enhancing existing and in the development of new skills to succeed. These include development in research methods, and for employability within and outside academia. Our programme includes training offered within your department, across your school, and across the University.

You can discuss your research skills training with your supervisor and adviser soon after you start your research degree. You can download the [Training Needs Analysis Tool](#) and [Research Student Training Log](#) which are designed to help you assess training needs and log training sessions and monitor whether these needs have been met.

5.1   Doctoral School Researcher Development Training brochure

[Read the Doctoral School Researcher Development Training brochure here](#)

5.2   Researcher Development Programme

[Find out more about the Researcher Development Programme](#)

- Email: pgrtraining@royalholloway.ac.uk

5.3   Research skills training within your School / department

Read your [department appendix](#) for details of research skills training within your department or School.

5.4   Teaching experience and training

Your department may be in a position to offer you opportunities to undertake teaching and/or demonstrating opportunities. In the event that you are employed in a lead teaching role, you are required to register for the University's inSTIL programme (Programme in Skills of Teaching to Inspire Learning). If you are teaching as part of a team, you may choose to do this programme but are not required to do so.

You must be engaged in teaching at the same time as participating in inSTIL, as teaching observations are an intrinsic element of the programme. The inSTIL programme is worth 15 M level credits and counts as seven days towards your skills training objectives. Successful completion of inSTIL confers Associate Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy: a valuable professional recognition.

- Email: edc@royalholloway.ac.uk

[Find out more about the inSTIL programme](#)

5.5 Community Research Hub

Royal Holloway's [Community Research Hub](#) is an initiative from the award-winning [Royal Holloway Volunteering](#) team. Community Research provides students with the opportunity to develop research-related skills and gain valuable real-world experience, by creating partnerships with charities and other non-profit organisations requiring pro bono research and data analysis.

"Volunteering through the Community Research Hub was honestly one of the best experiences in my PhD, I loved it and the charity I worked with. I am still volunteering even though I have finished my studies" - Yesha Bhagat, volunteer with Harry's Hydrocephalus Awareness Trust.

- Email: CommunityResearchHUb@royalholloway.ac.uk

[Find out more what opportunities are currently available to develop your skills and experience](#)

6 Enhancing your employability skills and opportunities

The Doctoral School aims to give you, as a postgraduate researcher, as many opportunities as possible to enrich your student experience and develop skills to support future career pathways, whether inside or outside academia.

[Read the Employability experiences for postgraduate research students brochure](#)

Find out more about:

- [StoryFutures PhD Placement in Industry Scheme](#)
- [GRADnet employer engagement programme for postgraduate researchers](#)
- [Alumni mentoring scheme for PGRs](#)
- [PGR alumni speaker series](#)
- [Training for an academic career](#)

7 Your supervisory team

As a Masters by Research student, you will have a principal (first) supervisor and may also have either a second supervisor or an advisor.

The success of your research depends to a large extent on the help and guidance provided by the supervisor. The University encourages students and supervisors to maintain close contact, particularly in the early stages of the work, in order to avoid difficulties.

7.1 Roles and responsibilities of your supervisory team

[Find out more about the roles and responsibilities of your supervisory team](#)

This should be read in conjunction with the list of [your own responsibilities as a research student](#)

7.2   Experiencing difficulties in your relationship with your supervisor?

Very occasionally, postgraduate researchers may experience difficulties in their supervisory relationship. If this does occur, the University would expect you to take reasonable steps to try to resolve such problems or difficulties with your supervisor(s) directly before referring the matter on.

If however a resolution is not possible or practicable, the case can then be referred on. Find out more about referring the case on.

If you are not sure where best to turn for help, please contact the Doctoral School for advice.

8   Your registration status

Further details regarding the areas outlined in this section can be found in the Research Degree regulations and the Code of Practice for Research Degree students and supervisors.

8.1   Study timeline

In order to retain your registration status as a postgraduate research student at Royal Holloway, you should be aware of following timeline:

- Dissertation submission deadline

As this deadline is based on the start date on your student record, it is very important that this start date is recorded correctly. If your start date has been postponed, make sure you submit a Change of start date form within the first 6 months of your study. If you are sponsored on a Student Route visa, you are not permitted to change your start date in our records once you have used your CAS in a visa application.

This deadline will be affected if you interrupt or change mode of attendance during your studies e.g., if you formally interrupt for 6 months, your submission deadline will extend by 6 months.

If you would like confirmation of your official start date or your submission deadline, please contact the Doctoral School.

If there are extenuating circumstances which make it unlikely that you will be able to meet this deadline, it is essential that you raise this with your supervisor / supervisory team as soon as possible.

8.2   Enrolment

You must complete enrolment every academic year in order to remain registered as a research student at Royal Holloway.

In your first year, you must complete the following stages of enrolment:

- Online Sign Up
- Pay your fees (unless you are funded by a studentship)
- Do your ID check

After that, you must complete the following each year: until you are awarded:

- Online Sign Up
- Pay your fees ([see below](#))

[Find out more about the enrolment process](#)

Please note the following regarding Online Sign Up:

- You must complete Online Sign Up every September even if your anniversary of starting is at a different time of year e.g., in January.
- You must complete Online Sign Up even if you have submitted your dissertation. You remain a student at Royal Holloway up until you have been awarded and need to be signed up to the current academic year's Online Sign Up declaration in order to be awarded.

Please note the following regarding fee payment:

- Full-time students: you are only billed fees in your first year. Even though you need to complete Online Sign Up for a second year, you are not liable for fees in the second year, unless you have previously interrupted.
- Part-time students: you are billed your second-year fees one month before the anniversary of when you started e.g., those of you who started in September will be billed in August.

[Find out more about postgraduate research fees](#)

8.3   Paid work restrictions

If you are registered as a full-time student:

- Any paid work you undertake to support your studies should not exceed 20 hours per week.
- Once you have submitted your dissertation however, this limit no longer applies.

If you are an international student:

- You must also ensure that any working restrictions, as stated on your visa, are also adhered to.

If you are a part-time student:

- There is no limit to the number of paid hours you work.

Details taken from the [Code of Practice for Research Degree students and supervisors](#)

8.4   Interrupting your studies

The [Research Degree Regulations](#) permit you to interrupt your studies for up to twenty-four months (whether consecutively or otherwise) on financial, medical or personal grounds on the recommendation of your supervisor.

Any period of interruption will normally only be permitted with supporting evidence and must be approved by your School Director of PGR Education

Students are also entitled to request an interruption of studies for reasons of maternity, paternity or adoption leave.

It is essential that you contact your supervisor or the Doctoral School at the very earliest possibility should you find that you require a period of interruption to your studies. Please note, a backdated (or retrospective) interruption will only be considered on the most exceptional grounds.

Find out more about interrupting your studies

Please note the additional considerations for students who are:

- funded
- sponsored on a Student Route visa

8.5   Change your mode of study

The Research Degree Regulations permit you to change your mode of study from full-time to part-time and vice versa.

If you are sponsored on a Student Route visa, you will not be permitted to change to part-time, under the restrictions of our sponsorship.

Find out more about changing your mode of attendance

9   Engagement with your studies

9.1   Holiday leave

You are entitled to up to eight weeks holiday (including public holidays and University closure days) within a 12-month period of registration.

You should notify your supervisor (cc. the Doctoral School) in writing of any holidays taken.

Further details in the Code of Practice for Research Degree students and supervisors

9.2   Researching abroad

If you are undertaking research abroad:

Non-Student Route visa students:

- Please ensure that you agree this with your supervisor and ensure that details of the location and dates have been approved prior to undertaking the research.
- These details should also be emailed to the Doctoral School so that they can be logged on your student record.

Student Route visa students:

- Please ensure that you complete the relevant form below and return to Student

Administration so that the University can update details of your study location with the UKVI, as required by the UKVI:

- o [Student Route visa- studying outside of the UK form](#)

- If you do not do this, you will be risking the continuation of your Student Route visa sponsorship with the University.
- For advice on the consequences to your visa of studying or writing up outside of the UK, please contact the [International Student Support Office](#).

9.3 Concerns about engagement with studies which lead to the formal warning process

According to the Research Degree Regulations, if your attendance, academic performance or productivity is unsatisfactory, the termination of registration may be requested following a formal warning process.

It is therefore essential that you alert your supervisor / supervisory team as soon as possible if you are experiencing difficulties with engaging with your studies so that the appropriate support and advice can be provided.

An academic formal warning provides an opportunity for your supervisor to raise any concerns they have about your engagement with your research, submission of work or standard of work and for you to raise any concerns of your own in relation to your studies.

Any formal warning you receive is normally permanent and will remain active on your student record until the end of your degree programme and as a permanent part of your student record even after completion of your studies.

[Find out more about the formal warning process](#)

[What to do if you receive a formal warning](#)

9.4 Withdrawal of Student Route visa for non-engagement with studies

If you are in receipt of a Student Route visa sponsored by Royal Holloway, it is a requirement of your visa that you engage with your studies (see section 5 of the [Code of Practice for Research Degree students](#) for more details).

The University has a legal responsibility to report any student admitted to the University on a Student Route visa who does not appear to be meeting the engagement requirements to UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI).

Therefore, if you fail to meet UKVI visa requirements and/or fail to respond to informal and formal warnings from the University in this regard, you could have your sponsorship withdrawn, your visa cancelled and your registration with the University discontinued.

The discontinuation of registration due to a breach in visa requirements is conducted independently of the University's formal warning process and the decision is not open to appeal. To help avoid this situation, as soon as you start encountering difficulties with engaging with your studies, please speak with the [International Student Support Office](#) for advice.

[Find out more about visas and immigration](#)

10 Reviews

Some departments require a formal review throughout your Masters by Research programme. Please see your department's appendix for details.

11 Assessment process

- Masters by Research assessment process - Guide for students
- If you are a Biological Sciences Masters by Research student, the assessment process is slightly different: MSc Biological Sciences by Research - Guide for students
- Overview of the Masters by Research exam process

11.1 Submission of thesis

It is recommended that you submit your exam entry form to the Doctoral School at least two months before you submit your dissertation. Before your dissertation can be assessed, your examiners need to be approved by your Director of PGR Education, your examiners need to be invited and they need to formally accept and this whole process can often take 4 - 8 weeks.

Find out more about submitting the Masters by Research dissertation

11.1.1 *Requirements of the dissertation*

Your dissertation should be a maximum of 40,000 words. Please refer to your department's appendix for any variance on this.

Assessment criteria
The dissertation shall:
    (a) synthesise knowledge from the subject or discipline and apply it to a suitable research problem, hypotheses or research questions;
    (b) provide a critical discussion of relevant major theories, debates and concepts;
    (c) demonstrate the capacity to design and carry out an independent research project using appropriate research methods and utilizing suitable skills and techniques;
    (d) undertake a clear analysis of the results of the project, and show informed and critical use of theories and concepts to interrogate these results;
    (e) provide a reasoned and coherent account of the main findings and their significance;
    (f) display good presentation and referencing skills.

Please refer to the Research Degrees regulations - appendix 1 - for further details.

11.1.2 *Royal Holloway proofreading scheme*

CeDAS oversees the Royal Holloway proofreading scheme, which enables students to pay for an approved third-party proofreader to identify surface error in final drafts. Please note, the University does not permit the use of paid third-party proofreaders who are not part of this scheme.

11.1.3 *Plagiarism*

The University takes the issue of plagiarism and other academic misconduct extremely seriously. All new PGR students are required to complete the 'Avoiding Plagiarism' course in Moodle

(moodle.royalholloway.ac.uk) prior to their first annual review. This 60-minute interactive online course is designed to ensure that students across all discipline areas follow best practice in referencing, paraphrasing and using citations.

Please refer to the University's [Regulations on Academic Misconduct](#) for what constitutes academic misconduct, as well as the procedures to be followed for the investigation of alleged academic misconduct and possible outcomes.

11.1.4 *Random submission of dissertations to Turnitin*

To help deter plagiarism, it is University policy to select a random sample of final research degree dissertations for submission to the plagiarism detection software, Turnitin, before the examination process is initiated. Exemptions are in place for theses covered by commercial confidentiality agreements. Turnitin reports are reviewed by the School Director of PGR Education. Should concerns be raised, you will be notified by the Doctoral School.

11.2 Assessment method

- If you are submitting for a Masters by Research, the default is that you will not have a viva on your dissertation, but this is at the discretion of your examiners.
- The exception to this is if the examiners are considering giving you a 6-month resubmission or fail outcome, in which case a viva is required.
- The Masters by Research dissertation is worth 180 credits. You are assessed on a pass / fail basis (just as with PhDs); there is no final percentage of classification.
- If you are required to complete taught courses as part of your Masters by Research programme (see your [department appendix](#) for details), you must have completed the course(s) in order to be awarded the Masters by Research. These taught courses are not credit-bearing.

[Find out more about the Masters by Research examination process](#)

11.3 If a viva is required

11.3.1 *Exam access arrangements*

If you have a disability, specific learning difficulty or impairment and wish to ask for reasonable adjustments to be made to the conduct of the viva, under the provisions of the [Regulations on Access Arrangements for Assessment](#) please indicate this on your exam entry form.

If you have indicated on your exam entry form that you are registered with Disability and Neurodiversity (D&N), the Doctoral School will contact the D&N team to ask for information about what [reasonable adjustments](#) can be made to the exam to better suit your needs. The examiners will be made aware of the D&N suggestions prior to the assessment, as appropriate. Please contact [D&N](#) if you require any further advice in this area.

11.3.2 *Extenuating circumstances*

In the case of extenuating circumstances relating to your performance at your viva, you should inform the [Doctoral School](#) prior to the viva, so that they can advise the examiners as appropriate and a decision can be made whether the viva should go ahead.

Where you feel that your academic performance on the date of the oral examination may be substantially affected by unexpected medical or other personal circumstances, you should inform the examiners of your situation no later than the start of the oral examination so that they can make a decision on whether or not to proceed. The examiners may require you to submit evidence of your condition to the Doctoral School within seven days.

11.3.3 *Independent Chair*

It is a regulatory requirement that all vivas are conducted in the presence of an Independent Chair. The role of an Independent Chair is to:

- oversee the oral examination to ensure that the examination is conducted fairly and in accordance with Royal Holloway Research Degree Regulations.
- ensure that the conduct of the viva provides the candidate with an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and to explain/defend their work.
- where necessary, help mediate between the examiners to identify possible recommendations and facilitate an agreed outcome, but not to provide any academic assessment.
- The Independent Chair is not required to have any detailed knowledge of the thesis and is not involved with the examiners' assessment of the candidate, beyond advising them of the outcome options available to them in the Research Degree regulations.

11.3.4 *Recording of the viva*

It is also a regulatory requirement that a recording is made of all vivas.

- The recording will only be made during the viva between you and the examiners.
- No recording will be made of any discussion held before or after the viva when you are not present.
- The recording will only be listened to in the event of an appeal made against the viva outcome and then only by a small number of staff who are involved in the investigation into the appeal.
- The recording will be kept securely until you have been awarded, after which time it will be destroyed.

11.4 Assessment outcomes

The following outcomes are available to your examiners at your 1st attempt:

- Pass
- Pass subject to six-week corrections.
- Resubmit the dissertation within 6 months.
- Fail

11.5 Award and graduation

11.5.1 *Approval process*

Once your examiners have confirmed to the Doctoral School that you have satisfied the criteria to be awarded your Masters by Research, the outcome and examiners' reports will be sent to your School Director of PGR Education to approve on behalf of the University. The date of your award will be the 1st of the month following this approval.

11.5.2 *Documentation*

Once your award has been processed by the Doctoral School, you will be emailed an official award letter which includes the date of your award and your dissertation title. You will also receive a copy of your examiners' report. Your degree certificate will be sent to you by the Diploma Production Office in central London within 3 – 6 months of the award letter.

11.5.3 *Graduation*

As a postgraduate research student, you can attend either the summer or the winter Graduation ceremony.

Receiving an invitation to attend the next graduation ceremony from the Graduation team does not make you eligible automatically. You can book your attendance / gown, but please do not make travel arrangements until both your corrections have been approved by your examiner(s) and your award has been officially confirmed to you by the Doctoral School.

- In order to be eligible to attend the graduation ceremony in July, you must have an award date of 1 June or earlier and you must have submitted your finalised thesis by 30 June.
- In order to be eligible to attend the graduation ceremony in December, you must have an award date of 1 November or earlier and you must have submitted your finalised thesis by 30 November.

[Find out more about the Graduation ceremonies](#)

11.5.4 *Alumni*

Please update your details and communication preferences with the [Alumni team](#) by completing [this form](#): this way you will be kept up-to-date with the latest University and alumni news, events and ways you can get involved. If you have any questions, please email alumni@royalholloway.ac.uk.

11.5.5 *Graduate Route*

If you are studying with Royal Holloway on a Student Route visa, you may be eligible to apply for the Graduate Route once your studies are complete. The Graduate route is designed to give students who have successfully completed their studies time in the UK to work. PhD students who are awarded their qualification prior to the expiry of their Student Visa are eligible to apply and will receive 3 years of leave under this scheme if the visa is granted.

You can find more details on the eligibility for this visa, your window of opportunity to apply and details on the application process on our [Graduate route pages](#).

We would strongly advise any researcher considering an application to the Graduate Route to get in contact with our International Support Team in advance of completing your studies at [internationaladvice@royalholloway.ac.uk.](mailto:internationaladvice@royalholloway.ac.uk)

12 Student representation and feedback

12.1 Your School's Staff-Student Action Meeting (SSAM)

We want to hear your views on the way your School operates and this is where the academic representation system comes in – which is a collaborative partnership between the Students' Union and the University. The system relies on student volunteers from within your cohort who represent you to ensure you receive the highest quality educational experience possible.

PGR Staff-Student Action Meetings are held at School level. They meet once a term and play an important role as a forum for airing view and for ultimately creating change.

Academic Reps attend and chair these meetings and you can volunteer to become and Academic rep for your School when the annual recruitment opens in September. This will give you the chance to directly influence what happens on your course and give a voice to your peers.

Please refer to the relevant [department appendix](#) for details of your School's PGR Staff-Student Action Meetings. [You can view the current representatives on your School's PGR SSAM here](#).

Keep an eye out for more information towards the start of term on the [Students' Union's website](#)

12.2 The Students' Union PGR Community Officer

Our new Student Communities are autonomous bodies that are responsible for working with the Union to secure the general interests and collective rights of the students that define into the relevant group. There will be two categories of communities, one for inclusion-based communities and one for academic-based communities.

They will also coordinate activities, events, and campaigns relevant to their agenda, which may include supporting and working across different student groups.

After successfully being elected during the Students' Union Summer elections, the PGR Students Community Officer for the 2023/24 academic year is Shupin Liu. The purpose of Shupin's role as PGR Community Officer is to:

- Build a sense of community and wellbeing with a focus on improving the inclusion of their group into student life.
- Plan and lead events and activities to promote, defend and extend the rights of their group.
- Actively seek feedback from students that identify within their group/
- Act as main point of contact for students that identify within their group and signpost them as needed.

You can get it touch with Shupin at PGR.Community@royalholloway.su

12.3 PGR Forum

The PGR Forum runs once a term and brings together representatives from the PGR School Staff-Student Action Meetings and the SU's PGR Community Officers to work together with the Doctoral School to drive forward improvements for the postgraduate research community at a University level. If you want to raise an issue at the PGR Forum, [contact one of the PGR Forum members](#).

12.4 Doctoral School Open Meeting

The [Doctoral School Open Meeting](#) runs once a term and gives you the opportunity to:

- find out what is happening across the University and in your School to support postgraduate researchers.
- raise questions with the Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Postgraduate Research), the Doctoral School managers and the School Directors of PGR Education.
- feedback your suggestions and opinions on a range of topics affecting postgraduate researchers.

12.5 Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)

The Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) is the only national survey for postgraduate research students' experience. It is run annually by Royal Holloway, working in partnership with [Advance HE](#) and Jisc.

PRES has been developed in consultation with the sector and has been robustly tested to ensure it produces valid results. The survey focuses on students' experiences of:

- supervision
- resources
- research community
- progress and assessment
- skills and professional development
- wellbeing

This is your chance to tell Royal Holloway about your experience as a postgraduate researcher here - both how the University is already supporting you on your research journey and what we can do to improve your experience here. Responses from you help the University improve both our current and future support.

[Find out more](#)

13 Appeals and Complaints

13.1 Appeals

An academic appeal is a request for reconsideration of a decision made by the University which relates to your academic progression. Appeals must be submitted within 15 working days of the date on which you were formally informed of the decision.

There are limited grounds of appeal and Sections 21 and 22 of the [Research Degree Regulations](#) set out these grounds and the process to be followed.

If you have also submitted a complaint and your grounds for an academic appeal are effectively dependent on the outcome of the complaint, the University may determine that the complaint should be investigated first under the Student Complaints Procedure. If this is the case, the complaint investigation will be carried out first and your appeal investigation will be placed on hold until the complaint investigation is complete. The University will endeavour to complete these processes as quickly as possible. However, a thorough investigation takes time, so the University strongly advises that you continue to make plans on the basis of the decision as it currently stands.

Find out more about academic appeals

13.2 Complaints

If you are dissatisfied with the provision of services or facilities by the University, or any aspect of your supervision or academic experience, please raise the issue with the relevant area of the University, your supervisor(s), advisor, Department PGR Lead, School Director of PGR Education or another member of staff in the department or school as soon as possible. In the majority of cases complaints can be resolved through an informal route. If this approach does not lead to a satisfactory resolution of your concerns, you may wish to submit a formal complaint for investigation under the Student Complaints procedure. A formal complaint should be submitted within three months of the incident or action being complained about.

Find out more about complaints

14 University regulations, policies and the Student Futures Manifesto

The Research Degree regulations set out the various standards that shape the regulatory framework of your research degree with the University. This document contains a variety of essential information, on topics ranging from admissions to academic progression and examination.

The Code of Practice for Research Degree students and supervisors sets out good practice alongside providing additional information on the policies and procedures that support the standards and expectations of the University..

14.1 The Student Futures Manifesto

The Student Futures Manifesto outlines our six commitments to you, which the University and Student's Union created together.

Find out more about the Student Futures Manifesto

14.2 Health and Safety

General health and safety policies

14.2.1 *Conduct on campus, in buildings and fire alarm response*

The University welcomes the high standard of personal conduct of our PGR students and their continued diligence in maintaining good housekeeping across campus and appropriate behaviours, particularly during unsupervised periods of time. Please check with supervisors on what equipment they are happy for you to use unsupervised and whether any lone working arrangements need to be in place. If you hear an alarm, please ensure that you leave the work area immediately and make your way to an assembly point. Never assume it is a false alarm, with the exception of known fire alarm testing.

Please always take care across campus and be particularly mindful around moving vehicles and areas where construction is taking place. Please do not skateboard in roads and make sure you are using electric scooters lawfully.

14.2.2 *Lone working policy and procedures*

The principles and guidance around lone working are often highly applicable to the nature of postgraduate research and the variety of activities this might involve. As such, awareness and planning around any lone working you may be required to undertake are essential.

Any health and safety concerns should be brought to the attention of your local Health and Safety Co-ordinator or the University Health and Safety Office. It is likely that most activities will take place on University premises. However, the principles also apply to students undertaking duties off campus.

Find out more about the University's lone working policy and procedure

14.2.3 *Fieldwork and travel*

The University has a risk-based process for the risk assessment and approval of fieldwork and travel. For higher risk travel this approval process can take several months and so if postgraduates are planning to travel as part of their work they should speak to your local Health and Safety Co-ordinator or the University Health and Safety Office.

Find out more about the University's fieldwork and travel policy.

14.2.4 *Stress and mental health*

Stress is part of any job, and can improve performance, but excessive stress and poor mental health is detrimental to both the individual and their work. Postgraduates should be mindful of the effects that stress can have and manage this, including using provided support if and when it is needed.

Your mental health is as important as your physical health and should be treated in the same way. There is a strong link between stress and mental health.

Find out more about the University's stress and mental health policy.

14.2.5 *Safeguarding*

Safeguarding is the protection of children (under 18s), vulnerable adults, and adults in a vulnerable situation – the latter definition can be particularly applicable to research participants. Any research involving people should consider safeguarding, particularly where the research occurs in developing nations.

Find out more about the University's safeguarding policy.

14.2.6 *Code of practice on harassment for students*

The University is committed to upholding the dignity of the individual and recognises that harassment can be a source of great stress to an individual. Personal harassment can seriously harm working, learning and social conditions and will be regarded and treated seriously. This could include grounds for disciplinary action, and possibly the termination of registration as a student.

The University's Code of Practice on personal harassment for students should be read in conjunction with the Student Disciplinary regulations and the Complaints procedure.

Find out more about support available if you are feeling harassed.

14.3 Equality, diversity and inclusion

Royal Holloway acknowledges societal inequalities and the impact of these on the personal and professional lives of individuals and groups. The University's vision as an institution is to cultivate a fair and inclusive environment that supports excellence in teaching, research and student experience. An institution where barriers are removed and everyone feels connected to the University, and supported to be themselves and reach their true potential. The University recognises the importance of building a diverse community comprising different perspectives and opinions, ensuring it is a relevant and supportive place for our diverse student body and a space where all colleagues are listened to and feel valued.

A recent restructuring of our EDI Governance has resulted in the eruption of a wide range of new initiatives designed to spur on action and lead to meaningful change. Initiatives include a wider range of inclusive policy statements and practices, including Transitioning At Work, and a suite of EDI Guides which include allyship, the impact of microaggressions and menopause awareness. The University offers a range of staff networks which are also open to PhD students (including our LGBT+ Staff Network, our Disability and Mental Health Staff Network and our new Menopause At Work Network) and is committed to marking diversity and inclusion events and celebrations throughout the year. The University is committed to facilitating more opportunities for conversations around equality and understanding lived experiences, for example through our Conversations About Race sessions, designed to enable staff and students to engage in meaningful, honest and at times challenging discussions about their experiences of race, regardless of their background.

At Royal Holloway, we want to establish a diverse community where everyone succeeds, is included, and feels that they belong. We have drafted a comprehensive plan, our EDI Framework 2023-2028, that will help us on our journey to achieve our ambition and see real progress and sustainable impact.

Find out more