



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH
The Royal (Dick) School
of Veterinary Studies

Handbook for Research Students at R(D)SVS

2023/24

Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies

The University of Edinburgh

www.ed.ac.uk/vet

This handbook is supplementary to the CMVM PGR 2023/24 handbook, containing further information of note to Postgraduate research students enrolled on R(D)SVS PGR degree programmes. It should be read in conjunction with the CMVM PGR handbook and the University Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students.

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Hello and Welcome to the R(D)SVS

This booklet has been put together by your Postgraduate Research Learning and Teaching Committee (PGRLTC) with the aim of giving you some insights into what you can expect as a PGR student here. We oversee the recruitment, assessment and pastoral care of the PGR students here at R(D)SVS. So, who are we?

Director of PGR and Chair of the PGRLTC: Dr Jo Stevens. I'm Director of PGR and a bacteriologist in the Roslin Institute (office 2.182). I was appointed Director of PGR in July 2023. Before this, I served as a convenor on the committee for over 10 years. I am passionate about student welfare and snacks.



Programme convenor for Functional Genetics & Development, encompassing students in the divisions of Functional Genetics and Translational Bioscience: Dr Gerry McLachlan. I study models of respiratory disease and am based in the Roslin Institute. I have been a convenor since for over 10 years. I love the outdoors both on a bike and on foot.

Programme convenor for Genetics & Genomics, encompassing students in the divisions of Epidemiology, Genome Biology, and Quantitative Biology: Dr Andy Law. I am the head of bioinformatics, based in the Roslin Institute. I have been a convenor for more than 10 years.



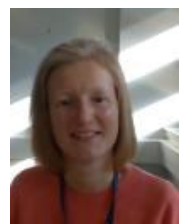
Programme convenor for Infection & Immunity, encompassing the divisions of Bacteriology, Epidemiology and Virology: Dr Elly Gaunt. I am a virologist, and I'm based in the Roslin Institute (office 2.170). I took over Jo's convenor role in July 2023 when she stepped up to head the committee.

Programme convenor for the Global Academy of Agriculture and Food Systems (GAAFS): Prof Liz Baggs. My chair is in Food and Environmental Security. I'm based in GAAFS and have been a convenor for several years.



Programme convenor for Clinical Veterinary Sciences: Prof Brendan Corcoran. I study veterinary cardiopulmonary medicine based in the vet school. I have been a convenor for several years.

Chair of the Postgraduate Student Advisory Committee (PSAC): Dr Jenny Fraser. I study prostate cancer and am based in the vet school in office. I took over as Chair of PSAC in 2022.



Welcome to the R(D)SVS! We sincerely hope you enjoy your time studying with us.

Training and Assessment Procedures for PhD Students

Introduction

The following guidelines are designed to help both students and supervisors in keeping PhD programmes on track. They are intended to ensure a systematic and fair management of the academic process. There may be exceptions when students do not commence study in September, or students are carrying out research/field work abroad as part of their thesis. Individual students should always discuss their assessment programme with their principal supervisor. It is very important that you read the whole of the *Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students* <http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/copsupervisorsresearchstudents.pdf>, which has details of what is expected of both students and supervisor/s. Note that some funding bodies, e.g. BBSRC, MRC and charities may require reports and other activities in addition to that outlined below.

Students must comply with any assessment requirements specific to their degree programme and the University's Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees for the current academic session: https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/pgr_assessmentregulations.pdf

Course Attendance

Postgraduate students are expected to attend all relevant courses of instruction and training throughout the period of their training. All students should attend the "Good Practice in PhD Research" at the beginning of their studies and other IAD courses as appropriate throughout the duration of student's studies. Some courses have been identified by the Postgraduate Research Learning and Teaching Committee (PRLTC) and attendance is highly recommended at specific times of study. Students are also expected to attend "Introducing experimental design and basic statistical analyses" or another appropriate course in the same subject area during their first year. Students are strongly advised to attend a wide range of seminars and lectures to obtain a broad base of knowledge in their field and related subjects and to keep a record of these. Your Thesis Committee (TC) will ask you about your attendance at seminars and lectures. At the assessments, the student will also be expected to give details of research training undertaken during the time period being considered.

Assessment in the First Year

All reports must be submitted to your TC at least 2-weeks before any TC meeting.

Research plan after 10 weeks

After 10 weeks students should have made some progress on understanding research techniques, developing appropriate laboratory skills, and have begun reading the literature. Experimental data is not expected at this stage but the student should be in a position to produce a brief plan of their first year's work, in consultation with their supervisors, which should not exceed **two sides of A4 in length**. At this point, additional co-supervisors and an external adviser should be appointed by your primary supervisor. A TC Chair will be appointed by the PRLTC. The co-supervisors may give a greater breadth to the student's training and provide day to day contact if the primary supervisor is not able to provide close supervision. However, the roles of the different supervisors will depend on what research you are undertaking. The role and membership of the TC is described in Appendix A. The student should organise the TC meeting (usually via a doodle poll to find a date suitable for all) and be prepared to give a short power-point presentation to introduce the topic of study and a research plan for the 1st year (and beyond). The TC will discuss the research plan and a report of the meeting, signed by all members of the Committee and the student should be submitted to the Postgraduate Office (RDSVS.PGR.Admin@ed.ac.uk) soon after the TC meeting.

First Year Assessment

The decision to allow a student to continue with their current registration or transfer to a different degree is taken after a formal assessment of progress in the first year of work based on a written report and an oral power point presentation. The written report (see below for details) should be submitted electronically to the Postgraduate Office (RDSVS.PGR.Admin@ed.ac.uk), and members of the TC Committee on 15th June or, for students who do not start at the beginning of the academic year, 9 months after registration. The TC meeting should take place as soon as possible after this date and must be completed by months 10-11 at the very latest. A recommendation on progression will be made by the TC. The composition of the TC is given in Appendix A. The student should organise the TC meeting (via a doodle poll) well in advance to find a date suitable for all.

Written Report

The purpose of the report is to ascertain that the student:

- 1) Has a thorough knowledge of the relevant literature, can make a critical appraisal of the key material in it and can place their own project in its proper context.
- 2) Can prepare a research plan for the remainder of the two or three (for 3.5 or 4-year programmes) years of study.
- 3) Can accurately report the work already done and its significance.

The written report should embody a literature review and should be prepared to a high standard. A clear statement of the aims of the project should be included, in addition to any data obtained during the year. It is recognised that at this stage some students may have few data to present. All references should be properly cited at the end of the report. **This report should be a maximum of 20 sides of A4 paper in font size 11.**

It is appreciated that the first year is mainly concerned with familiarisation with the problems and techniques involved in the project. These are best discussed in the oral presentation.

The report will be scanned for plagiarism via the turn-it-in software. See Appendix E for further information on plagiarism and how to avoid it.

Power point presentation

This should take the form of a brief introduction to the project, followed by presentation of results. The student presentation should last around 20-25 minutes. The TC will then discuss specific points raised in the written report and oral presentation. While the major concern of the TC is with content, the presentation should be well organised. Students are strongly advised to rehearse the talk in front of colleagues and/or a supervisor. The student will be asked to leave the room to allow the TC to discuss the outcome. The student will have an opportunity to discuss the report and presentation and any issues arising regarding their study with the Chair and External in the absence of the supervisors. The outcome of such discussion will be minuted but will remain confidential.

Feedback

A report of the TC meeting will be produced by the Chair of TC, and signed by all members of the TC. The student will be informed of the TC's view and will be asked to sign to confirm that they have read the report produced by the Chair. The student has the right to comment on the TC report. The TC Chair is responsible for sending the report to the Postgraduate Office (RDSVS.PGR.Admin@ed.ac.uk). This should occur within one-two weeks of the TC meeting.

Outcomes

Students will only be allowed to continue with their PhD registration if the TC is satisfied with progress made. Satisfactory students will continue with their PhD studies and have their registration confirmed. In the case of inadequate performance, a further recommendation from the TC will be needed in terms of whether the student is (a) reassessed within 3 months, (b) re-registered for a different degree or (c) excluded from study. The recommendation of option (c) would require the approval of College Board of Examiners. For part-time students see 1.7 below.

On-line Progression Review

Eight months after the start of the academic year students will receive an email from University of Edinburgh asking them to complete a progress report via EUCLID. This asks for information on progress, activities and future plans. First year students should upload their 10-week and 9 month written report, as well as their TC reports for both meetings. In later years can all relevant material such as TC reports and thesis plans should be uploaded. Once completed by the student, the review is passed to the supervisors for comments and then to the Postgraduate Director. Students can view comments from their supervisors and the Postgraduate Director before the final report goes to the College.

Assessment in the Second Year

Thesis Committee Meeting

At the end of the second year the TC will meet (organised by student via doodle poll) to discuss the student's progress and agree a plan for the next year. The meeting will normally include a short (20-25 minute) power point presentation on the student's project and future plans. Students on 3 year programmes should present an outline of their thesis with chapter titles and a timetable for completion. This plan should be sent to the PRLTC together with the TC's report. Students on 3.5 and 4 year programmes should also discuss plans for the third year. A written report is not expected but a summary of achievements against planned goals may be useful.

Feedback

Following the TC meeting the student will receive written comments which will be signed and distributed as for the first year assessment. The TC may at this stage have to assess whether the student can complete their PhD within the allotted time or whether any other course of action is required. A signed TC report should be sent to the PRLTC.

On-line Progression Review

Students will receive an email from University of Edinburgh asking them to complete a progress report. This asks for information on progress, activities and future plans. Students should upload relevant material such as TC reports and thesis plans. Once completed by the student, the review is passed to the supervisors for comments and then to the Postgraduate Director. Students can view comments from their supervisors and the Postgraduate Director before the final report goes to the College.

Assessment in the Third Year

Third Year (3 year programmes)

Students who have not yet submitted their thesis for examination should hold a 3rd year TC meeting. This meeting should focus on submission in a timely manner and certainly by the maximum period of

study (4 years). Any obstacles identified to be holding up progress/submission should be discussed and resolved. A signed TC report should be sent to the PRLTC.

Third Year (> 3 year programmes)

At the end of the third year the TC will meet to discuss the student's progress and agree a plan for the final year (or part of). The student should present an outline of their thesis with chapter titles and a timetable for completion. This plan and signed TC report should be sent to the PRLTC.

On-line Progression Review

Students will receive an email from University of Edinburgh asking them to complete a progress report. This asks for information on progress, activities and future plans. Students should upload relevant material such as TC reports and thesis plans. Once completed by the student, the review is passed to the supervisors for comments and then to the Postgraduate Director. Students can view comments from their supervisors and the Postgraduate Director before the final report goes to the College.

Final Year

Final year PhD students should give an oral presentation at the School Research Student Day. This is a formal occasion which will allow the student to "showcase" their research. The importance of early planning in the final year, in order to submit the thesis within the maximum period of study (4 years for full time study), should not be underestimated. To enable PhD students to judge when their work is completed the five questions that have to be answered by the examiners of the student's viva are listed in Appendix B.

Assessment of Part-Time Students

Assessment of part-time students in the first year of study is identical to assessment of full-time students. Part-time students are required to produce a 10 week research plan and a 9 month report both of which will be assessed by their TC. It is recognised that part-time students will not have made the same progress as full-time students and assessment of their progress and future plans will take this into account. Exceptionally, the first progression review may be postponed with permission from College. The postponement must be no longer than 6 months. Confirmation may be deferred until the second annual review. In subsequent years, part-time students should have an annual TC meeting to assess progress and plans.

Notification of an intention to submit a thesis for examination

All candidates must notify the **College Postgraduate Secretary** of their intention to submit their work for examination. This notification must be given on a form obtainable from College Offices (and CMVM wiki) and should normally be made at least two months before the thesis is submitted – for further details please refer to

https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/pgr_assessmentregulations.pdf Full details of the examination process can be found at

www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/CMVMPGR/Doctorate+Examination

www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/CMVMPGR/MSc+By+Research+Examination

Assessment of a PhD Thesis

Listed below are the five questions that have to be answered by internal and examiner examiners when examining a PhD thesis submitted to the University of Edinburgh.

- 1) Is the thesis an original work that makes a significant contribution to knowledge in or understanding of the field of study?
- 2) Does the thesis contain material worthy of publication?

- 3) Does the thesis demonstrate adequate knowledge of the field of study and relevant literature?
- 4) Does the thesis show the exercise of critical judgement with regard to both the student's work and that of other scholars in the same general field?
- 5) Is the presentation and style of the thesis satisfactory?

Training and Assessment Procedures for MSc by Research Students

Introduction

An MSc by Research is a very intensive degree and the following guidelines are designed to help both students and supervisors in keeping the MSc programme on track. They are intended to ensure a systematic and fair management of the academic process. Individual students should always discuss their assessment programmes with their supervisors. It is very important that you read the whole of the *Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students*

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/copsupervisorsresearchstudents.pdf>, which has details of what is expected of you and your supervisor/s. Students funded by certain funding councils may have to provide reports and other work in addition to that outlined below.

Course Attendance and Work Plan

All reports must be submitted to your TC at least 2-weeks before any TC meeting.

Postgraduate students are expected to attend all relevant courses of instruction and training. Please note that all MSc by Research students at the R(D)SVS are expected to attend relevant research seminars and keep a record of their attendance in electronic or paper form.

An MSc by Research is a short intense degree and it is critical that a well-structured research plan is in place in order to meet the timescales. Students must produce a research plan no later than 10 weeks after starting. The plan should not exceed two sides of A4 in length and should be submitted electronically to Postgraduate Administration (RDSVS.PGR.Admin@ed.ac.uk). All MSc by research students will have a TC with the same format as that of PhD students which will review the research plan and act as support throughout the degree. At the TC meeting (organised by the student via a doodle poll) students should give a short power point presentation covering the plan and include detailed time lines for the year. Whilst there is no requirement for a further meeting of the TC, students and/or chairs should arrange further meetings if requested or any issues arise. The TC is primarily there to support the student and provide extra support if the need arises.

Candidates are advised to have read the bulk of the relevant literature within six months of starting and to have a draft of the literature review written by eight months.

Submission

All the relevant work should be submitted within 12 months of registration if registered full-time or 24 months if registered part-time.

Assessment

The work is assessed by the examiners using the following criteria. No viva is required for MSc by Research students but their thesis will be read and marked by one internal and one external examiner.

MSc by Research students produce a thesis of not more than 30,000 words. The student must have demonstrated by the presentation of a dissertation that they are capable of pursuing research, or a critical survey of knowledge in the field of study, or both combined with a satisfactory plan for a more advanced research project. The research must demonstrate competence, knowledge and be presented in a critical and scholarly way.

Particular aspects considered by the examiners

- 1) Does the work described in the dissertation show awareness of the literature in the field?

- 2) Where appropriate state whether the work described in the dissertation is technically correct.
- 3) Do you judge that the candidate has a good understanding of the work that the student has been doing?
- 4) Is the dissertation satisfactory in its literary presentation?

PGR Thesis Committee Guidelines

Each PhD student has a Thesis Committee (TC), the main purpose of which is to assist the student to present a successful thesis within the specified time and to support the student's supervisors. The TC is also responsible for ensuring the student receives a rounded education, including instruction and experience in appropriate scientific and transferable skills, and for monitoring the provision of facilities and resources to the student. The TC should support the student in all aspects of their studies including providing advice on career development and, where necessary, pastoral support. The TC Chair will be appointed by the Director of PGR. In addition to the Chair (who will be a member of staff with experience of supervising postgraduate students), each TC will include the Principal Supervisor(s), co-supervisor(s) and one other (External Adviser). The external adviser should have expertise in the area of the student's research project and be able to offer advice where necessary. The external adviser should not be involved in the student's project. TCs should have a gender balance e.g. female students should have at least one female member of their TC. If the TC is all male for academic reasons, then another female member must be co-opted onto the committee. This could be a senior female post-doc or another member of staff who is there to provide support.

The remit of the TC is to:

- Monitor the student's progress at all stages of their studies.
- Ensure sufficient and appropriate supervision of the student, and to initiate remedial action whenever necessary.
- Make recommendations to the PRLTC when required.
- Advise the student on appropriate courses in scientific and transferable skills.
- Monitor the provision of facilities and resources to the student, as appropriate for the student and the research project.
- Meet with the student to discuss progress and reports as follows:
 - The Research Plan, after 10 weeks.
 - The First Year Report; which should be submitted to School Postgraduate Administration (RDSVS.PGR.Admin@ed.ac.uk), by the end of the ninth month after initial registration. The TC will normally meet within two months of the submission date of the first year report and at this meeting the student will make a 20/25-minute presentation of results. The report from this meeting will be signed by all those present including the student.
 - Second Year Progress Meeting and thesis plan.
 - Third Year Progress Meeting and thesis plan.
- In addition to academic progress, the TC should discuss the student's career development (opportunities to attend transferable skills courses, seminars and scientific meetings) and future careers.
- Agree a report on the student's progress for the School PGSC.
- Students in Associated Institutions registered in the School of Veterinary Studies, who are not normally working within the School and who have Principal Supervisors, only one of whom is from the School, will undergo the same system of supervision as a student based in the School.

Note: MScR students only meet with their TC at 10 weeks.

Contacts and student support

School Postgraduate Learning and Teaching Committee (PGRLTC)

The PGRLTC oversees all postgraduate education within the School. The committee ensures that all students receive the same standard of postgraduate training and support by monitoring the progress of all postgraduate students registered at the R(D)SVS.

The PGRLTC aims to promote and facilitate interactions between students working in different Centres and Institutes within the School and to encourage a wider sense of community.

The PGRLTC admin contact is (RDSVS.PGR.Admin@ed.ac.uk).

Membership of the PGRLTC

Director of Postgraduate Research R(D)SVS Chair of PGRLTC	Dr Jo Stevens Jo.Stevens@roslin.ed.ac.uk	651 9241
Secretary Postgraduate Research Learning and Teaching Committee	Elaine McDonald elaine.mcdonald@roslin.ed.ac.uk	651 9192
Chair Postgraduate Student Advisory Committee (PSAC)	Dr Jenny Fraser jenny.fraser@ed.ac.uk	651 7300
Divisional Convenors		
Functional Genetics and Development	Dr Gerry McLachlan gerry.mclachlan@roslin.ed.ac.uk	651 9155
Infection & Immunity	Dr Elly Gaunt Elly.Gaunt@roslin.ed.ac.uk	651 9152
Genetics & Genomics	Dr Andy Law andy.law@roslin.ed.ac.uk	651 9154
Clinical Sciences	Professor Brendan Corcoran Brendan.Corcoran@ed.ac.uk	650 7650
Global Academy for Agriculture & Food Safety	Professor Liz Baggs Liz.Baggs@ed.ac.uk	651 9396
Clinical Research Scholar Director	Dr Claudia Hartley Claudia.hartley@ed.ac.uk	
BBSRC CMVM EASTBIO DTP coordinator	Dr Jo Stevens jo.stevens@roslin.ed.ac.uk	651 9241
Chair Postgraduate Research Staff/Student Liaison Committee	Dr Jenny Fraser jenny.fraser@ed.ac.uk	651 7300
Director of Postgraduate Taught	Dr Fiona Borthwick fiona.borthwick@ed.ac.uk	
Moredun Institute Representative	Dr Stewart Burgess stewart.burgess@moredun.ac.uk	445 5111

Postgraduate Manager	Kate Ainsworth	650 8782
SRUC Dean of Postgraduate Studies	Dr Toni Dismore Toni.Dismore@sruc.ac.uk	535 4323
Postgraduate Student Representative	Christine Grant Christine.grant@ed.ac.uk	

Other Postgraduate Committees in R(D)SVS

Postgraduate Staff/Student Liaison Committee

This committee meets twice during the year (more often if necessary) to discuss matters of concern to all postgraduate students and staff of the School. The committee is chaired by Dr Jenny Fraser and is attended by the Director of PGR and student representatives from the School and our affiliated Institutes.

Easter Bush Society

The Easter Bush Society organises academic and social events between PG Students across the campus. Email: easterbushPG@mlist.is.ed.ac.uk

Mental Health & Wellbeing Support at University of Edinburgh

Emergency Student support

In cases of emergency students should dial 2222. This number is only available from the University internal telephone system. Students in Residences or those calling from a mobile phone should dial (0131) 650 2257.

While university life is full of exciting opportunities, it can sometimes be an overwhelming time. Here you can find information to support your physical and mental health and wellbeing.

We have a range of support services to guide you through your university journey, and help to support your wellbeing. These include:

- Student support teams/Graduate School staff in Schools and Deaneries
- Our [Chaplaincy](#), for all faiths or none, offer The Listening Service 24/7 365 days a year for confidential caring conversations as well as Mindfulness, Yoga, Tai-Chi, PhD bookclub, Writing and Doodling workshops
- Drop-in groups such as [Skills for Life and Learning](#) run by Student Counselling, IAD [study skills](#), [Disability support groups](#) and Comfort Cafes
- Keeping active through our [Feel Good Walks](#), [Just Play Sport Sessions](#), and through the various offering of our [Sport & Exercise team](#), including the Pleasance gym, St Leonards Land swimming pool, sports teams, clubs and the [Sports Union](#)
- [Residence Life](#) provide wellness support for those in University accommodation
- [Student Counselling Service](#) offer short-term counselling
- [Disability & Learning Support Service](#) for learning adjustments, mentoring and other specialist support
- [The Advice Place](#) for independent support and The Student's Association for student societies, peer support, Nightline and Let's Talk campaign & events

Health Services

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/students/health-and-wellbeing/health-services>

During your time in Edinburgh, there may be occasions when you need to see a health care specialist such as a doctor, pharmacist, dentist or optician. A range of health and supporting services are provided by the University and throughout Edinburgh to help you feel your best.

Your Wellbeing

You deserve to feel your best! There are lots of factors that might affect your general wellbeing while at University – from study pressures and relationship issues to how much you exercise. Some of these will be easier to manage than others, but there are opportunities and support available that can help to minimise stress and make sure you're feeling good emotionally, psychologically and physically.

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/students/health-and-wellbeing/sport-and-exercise>

Things not going well?

If you're experiencing personal difficulties that are affecting your emotional, physical or psychological wellbeing, it's important to know that you are not alone. There are lots of people here to help you and provide the support you need. You may want to speak to a professional about what is happening or simply find out some information about how to manage certain situations.
<https://www.ed.ac.uk/students/health-and-wellbeing/mental-wellbeing>

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IT IS IMPORTANT FOR YOU TO COME FORWARD AND ASK FOR HELP AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE. IF YOU ARE NOT SURE WHAT TO DO, PLEASE CONTACT YOUR SUPERVISOR OR PGR PROGRAMME CONVENOR AS THE FIRST STEP.

Support at R(D)SVS

Health & Wellbeing

The R(D)SVS is committed to providing pastoral support for all postgraduate students. In most instances, supervisors will be the first line of support. In cases where students wish to talk to an independent advisor several options are open. Students may speak to their Thesis Committee Chair, Divisional Convenors, the PGR Director or PSAC chair. Please see page X for contact details.

Peer support group

The PG peer support group are made up of postgraduate volunteers from across Easter Bush campus who have received training in student peer support, confidentiality and active listening. If you have questions, concerns or just need a chat about your studies, research or home then we are here to listen.

By contacting a peer supporter, you can discuss your feelings and experiences in a confidential and supportive environment. You can contact any of the volunteers listed below by emailing our inbox at EBPGRsup@exseed.ed.ac.uk. Only the peer supporters [listed](#) on the [Mental Health Portal](#) have access to this inbox. If there's a peer supporter you feel would be best for you to chat to, let us know in the email.

The peer supporters will be available throughout the year offering a space to chat about academic and career-related support, as well as a space to talk about our mental health and wellbeing. There will be regular events to discuss some of the major milestones of the PhD, including your thesis committee meetings and other topics such as data management, careers and more.

For more information about the scheme, or to express interest in volunteering, please contact EBPGRsup@exseed.ed.ac.uk.

Postgraduate support & advisory committee (PSAC)

The R(D)SVS Postgraduate Student Advisory Committee (PSAC) supports PGR and PGT students, Clinical Scholars (Residents), and their supervisory teams, in cases of poor academic performance or issues affecting student wellbeing. The committee is chaired by Dr Jenny Fraser and supported by the R(D)SVS Director of PGR and PGR convenors.

Support for Postgraduate Students with Caring Responsibilities

The School is committed to providing pastoral support for all postgraduate students.

Caring for carers

This guidance outlines the support available to postgraduate students who have a caring responsibility so that they are able to balance their studies with caring commitments

Who is a carer?

A carer is a person who provides a substantial amount of unpaid care on a regular basis for another individual or a person who provides more occasional support to cope with changes in circumstances or health of another individual.

The University recognises that a carer can be a spouse, parent, sibling, child or other dependent and could be living in the same home as the person being cared for or further away.

Support

The School appreciates that caring places demands on students and at times it may be difficult for them to combine studies and caring responsibilities.

Therefore, The Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies will adopt the following principles:

To give sympathetic consideration to requests for support from those who have caring responsibilities, based on a shared understanding of the situation and its impact at work

To view the making of requests for support as acceptable and ensure that no one is treated unfairly because of their caring responsibilities

To handle requests for support with discretion and tact

In most instances, supervisors will be the first line of support. In cases where students wish to talk to an independent advisor several options are open. The Postgraduate Support and Advisory Committee (PSAC) is available to provide support to all students within the School. Alternatively, students can seek advice from the PGR Director or Divisional Postgraduate Convenors:

Clinical Scholars: Claudia Hartley

Clinical Sciences: Brendan Corcoran

Functional Genetics and Development: Gerry McLachlan

Genetics and Genomics: Andy Law

Infection and Immunity: Elly Gaunt

Global Academy for Agriculture and Food safety: Liz Baggs

Sick pay, Maternity and Family Leave Policy

Sick pay

Students funded via the School, College or a UKRI training grant are entitled to receive stipend payments during absences covered by medical certificates and an approved Interruption of Studies. This will be for up to 13 weeks, within any 12-month period. Medical absences beyond the 13 weeks period will not be funded. Beyond 13 weeks studentships will normally be put into abeyance. See www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/UKRI-04042023-UKR_Training-Grant-Terms-And-Conditions-April-2023.pdf

Maternity and Family Leave Policy

This policy is based on the terms and conditions for Research Council training grants, (revised May 2018) and the related briefing issued by the Research Councils UK on maternity, paternity, shared parental and adoption leave, see www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/UKRI-04042023-UKR_Training-Grant-Terms-And-Conditions-April-2023.pdf

Further guidance is provided in the University's Student Maternity and Family Leave Policy see <https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/studentmaternitypolicy.pdf>.

R(D)SVS wishes to ensure that its approach to the handling of maternity and other family leave is supportive, without being intrusive and that the welfare of the parent(s) and child/children are protected. R(D)SVS also wishes to ensure that postgraduate research (PGR) students are treated fairly and made fully aware of their parental leave entitlements and are not disadvantaged in their studies due to pregnancy or adoption.

SCOPE

This policy covers PGR students registered within R(D)SVS

- any PGR student who becomes pregnant during her studies (maternity leave),
- any PGR students who is to become a father during his studies (paternity leave),
- any PGR student who is the partner of a student who is pregnant (including a same sex partner) and
- any student becoming a parent during their studies through adoption of a child (adoption leave)

THE POLICY

R(D)SVS is committed to providing adjustments to PGR students to ensure that they are not disadvantaged in their studies due to pregnancy or adoption of a child.

1. Students to become parents

Any student who has their pregnancy confirmed by a GP, is to become a father, or is to adopt a child, is encouraged to report this to their supervisor and to R(D)SVS PGR administration and their Divisional PGR convenor so that they can provide appropriate academic advice.

2. Implications for the programme of study

The student will meet with their supervisor to address the following issues:

- whether an interruption of study will be required and, if so, for how long (an interruption would not normally exceed one year);
- if assessments or progression reports are pending, whether the student is fit to attempt the assessments or to complete the progression reports, and

- any time-off or possible modifications to attendance that might be required so that the student can attend medical or other essential appointments.

Please note – supervisors would not be responsible for granting interruption of study to postgraduate students. In these instances, the normal interruption of studies procedure for PGR students should be followed.

3. Study Abroad

Where a student has their pregnancy confirmed whilst studying abroad, they are encouraged to contact their supervisor and their Divisional PGR convenor to ensure that adequate steps are taken to make necessary adjustments

4. Resumption of studies

Students should not return to R(D)SVS within two weeks of the birth of their child, as outlined in s.8(b) of the '*Maternity and Parental Leave (etc.) Regulations 1999*'.

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/1999/3312/contents/made

The student will be responsible for confirming that they are ready to resume their studies at the end of their agreed period of interruption. They should inform their supervisor and PGR administration that they are ready to return so that the appropriate arrangements can be made. Directly before, or as soon as practical after their return, the student should meet with their supervisor to ensure that any necessary adjustments are made to ensure a smooth return to their programme of study. Students are reminded that it is not permitted to bring children into R(D)SVS routinely.

5. Health and Safety

There are health and safety issues that the R(D)SVS must take into consideration in order to protect the mother and unborn baby:

The supervisor must ensure that, a risk assessment is carried out; this is particularly important where the student may come into contact with livestock or other animals or sources of zoonoses, which could include visits to farms or other research facilities. However, issues with lack of concentration, tiredness, weakness etc. must also be considered

If the student requires, the student will be advised on appropriate adjustments and provisions to allow the student to breast feed and express milk on campus.

6. Students on Visas

PGR students studying at R(D)SVS on a sponsored Tier 4 visa will need to consider the length of maternity / paternity / adoption leave depending upon:

- i. the timing of any interruption of studies,
- ii. the due date,
- iii. academic progress and dates,
- iv. the decision the student has taken about progressing with their studies after the birth of the child.

Students on Tier 4 visas who become pregnant during their studies must seek up-to-date immigration advice from the International Student Advisory Service at Edinburgh Global. Advisers will provide a confidential and supportive service, including written advice, to set out possible options for students and their academic supervisors. Under rules as of April 2017, students cannot extend their visa for reasons relating to pregnancy or maternity. There are no

concessions within the Tier 4 rules specifically allowing for maternity leave. The maximum period of approved authorised interruptions of studies will be considered on an individual basis but is similarly limited by Home Office regulations. Advisors can be contacted through visa.help@ed.ac.uk

The visa implications of a maternity/paternity/adoption leave should be considered at the earliest possible opportunity and it is vital therefore that the International Student Advisory Service are included in discussions relating to any absence due to pregnancy. They can be contacted at isas@ed.ac.uk (<https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/studentmaternitypolicy.pdf>).

7. Finance

Different funders have different rules on what they provide and for how long, therefore PGR students who are in receipt of funding from external bodies should contact them for advice on funding related issues. UKRI has a standard approach which applies to students on research council-funded studentships. This should be discussed with your supervisor and HR and finance departments informed. Please contact your Divisional PGR Convenor or PGR Director if you require further clarification.

The University will not be liable if an external funding body does not cover Maternity costs. Where a student is also an employee of the University, they should contact HR for advice on any entitlement to Maternity pay.

The Advice Place can provide advice to students on a number of finance related issues: [Edinburgh University Students' Association](#)

NOTE: If a student decides to end their registration and cease the programme of study within 3-months of returning to study, they will be required to pay back all maternity pay received, less an amount equivalent to Statutory Maternity Pay, for the period of paid leave taken.

Study time allocation for clinical and research staff studying part-time

Undertaking a PhD is a stressful and time-consuming process for any student. It can be doubly so for members of staff studying part-time who also have to meet the obligations of their paid employment. It is important, therefore, that there is a balance of time agreed and allocated in advance to each of those responsibilities (work and study). This provides a good frame of reference for all concerned – be they student, line manager or supervisor – and maximises the likelihood of a successful completion of the degree within the prescribed period of time for a part-time PhD (normally 6 years).

The PRLTC recommend a minimum of 50% of available time should be set aside for study for someone undertaking a part-time PhD. Furthermore, where possible, this time should be made available in blocks appropriate for the type of research being conducted although there is an appreciation of the administrative difficulties (e.g. timetabling for clinical staff) which this may cause. Regardless, a 50% study/50% work split should be considered to be the default position.

If a 50% allocation of time for study is not considered to be possible, then this must be fully justified by the student's line manager (in writing) to the student, the student's supervisors and the Divisional PG convenor and/or Director of PG studies. If a suitable agreement cannot be reached on "ring-fencing" protected study time, then the Head of School or the Institute Director will be consulted for clinical or Institute-based research staff respectively. In situations whereby discrepancies exist between the "recommended" and "actual" time allocated for study during employment working hours, the student should be made fully aware (preferably in writing) that this will almost invariably necessitate completion of a variable proportion of the study out with employment working hours.

The subsequent agreement of time allocation will be recorded and the document signed by the student, the student's line manager and the student's supervisors and sent to PGR administration. This document will be made available to the student's Thesis Committee at the 10 week report stage and thereafter. It is expected that this will be a working document which may be updated to reflect changes in the student's working arrangements. If this is deemed necessary, then agreement will be sought as before *i.e.* between the student, line manager and supervisors and the Divisional PG convenor and/or Director of PG studies.

Having an agreement in place at an early stage in the project will allow for forward planning by the line manager throughout the duration of the staff members PhD and thereby minimise any impact on the non-PhD related responsibilities (e.g. clinical, teaching and research support obligations) of both the staff member enrolled in the post-graduate program and other staff members with whom they work. It is strongly recommended that a parallel PDR process also be conducted to redefine the employee's work roles and responsibilities across the duration of the study period.

Research Student Day

The R(D)SVS Research Student Day is held in Semester 2. All research students are expected to take part. First and second year PhD and MSc students are expected to present a poster. Third year students on 4 year programmes should also present a poster. Final year students are expected to give an oral presentation. Clinical Research Scholars students are encouraged to present a poster or oral (in final year). The day concludes with a Keynote lecture from an eminent scientist.

Birrell-Gray Travel Scholarships

These Scholarships are available to Postgraduate Students who are carrying out research in the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies. These awards are not intended to be the exclusive source of funding but are intended to provide additional funding for travel for anyone who is involved in an existing research project. Scholarships for MSc projects is not allowed. The following conditions will apply:

1. The value of each scholarship will not exceed £500.
2. The maximum available to any one individual over the course of their studies is £500.
3. Retrospective applications will not be considered.
4. Funds may be used for travel, accommodation or conference registration. Travel arrangements should be as economical as possible and travel receipts will be required.
5. For conference attendance applicants are expected to present their work. Conference details should be included within Scholarship applications.
6. All applications must be supported by the Head of Division or associated Institute's PG advisor.
7. Application forms are available via RDSVS.PGR.Admin@ed.ac.uk
Applications should be submitted to RDSVS.PGR.Admin@ed.ac.uk
8. Scholarships will be awarded by the PGRLTC
9. A report must be submitted to the PGRLTC no longer than three months after the event. This report should detail how the award was spent, summarising the benefits gained by the student.

Courses of Interest to Postgraduate Students

Institute for Academic Development

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/institute-academic-development>

Transferable Skills Programme

The acquisition and development of generic research and transferable skills is an important part of postgraduate training. Courses covering a wide range of these skills are available to postgraduate research students through the transferable skills programme. This programme concentrates on the professional development of postgraduates, providing courses directly linked to postgraduate study (e.g. Thesis Workshop, Paper Production) and future careers (e.g. Career Planning, Team Development). The programme also provides information on other training opportunities for postgraduates.

Courses are free of charge to the student and the programme has been designed to be as flexible as possible so that each student can tailor the content and timing of the programme to their own requirements. Most courses are run several times each year and last for between half a day and a day. Students may attend as many courses as they wish and a transcript providing details of the courses attended can be provided on request. Guidance on the background needed for each course is provided on the Web. We also advise students to consult their supervisors before booking places. Students will be sent an e-mail newsletter advertising courses at least once each term and posters will be sent to departments. If you are not receiving this information please let us know by sending an e-mail to iad.phd@ed.ac.uk. Some courses are held on the Easter Bush Campus although most are Central based.

Personal Licensee Training Course

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/bioresearch-veterinary-services/pil-training-courses>

Courses are currently held 4 times a year in Edinburgh. Dates are available via <https://www.ed.ac.uk/bioresearch-veterinary-services/pil-training-courses/training-for-personal-licence-applicants>

Basic Course in Radiation Protection in Laboratory Work in Science and Medicine

http://www.safety.ed.ac.uk/training/course_timetable.shtml

The basic course in Radiation Protection normally runs twice per academic year. For new workers this course provides the basic instruction necessary before undertaking any radiation work. The information provided must be supplemented by training and instruction in practical procedures in your department. Discuss attendance at all or some of the sessions with your supervisor.

Further information, including dates of the courses, can be found at the URL above.

Biology Teaching Organisation (BTO) Demonstrators

Anyone interested in demonstrating on Biological Sciences courses should consult:

<https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/intranetpublic/Demonstrating+and+Tutoring>.

and complete a registration form. Those who are assigned to assist with a course will be required to present their eligibility to work documentation, attend a training session and complete a job application form before the demonstrating starts. Enquiries can be sent to bto.demonstrators@ed.ac.uk

English Language Proficiency and Training

<http://www.ials.ed.ac.uk/>

If English is not your first language, the University has certain requirements for admission based on the results of standard language tests. You will have encountered these before receiving your letter of admission, but you may still be required to do some supplementary English language tuition before commencing your main study programme. This will normally be done at the Institute for Applied Language Studies, which is part of the University. The institute runs a wide range of courses to cater for the specific needs of academic study. In addition to these preparatory courses, the Institute also offers a number of specialised courses on a part-time basis during the academic year which may be of interest to foreign students. If you or your supervisor feels that your use of English is still a constraint to your study, especially in writing reports, you should discuss this and consult the Language Institute at an early stage. **Do not wait until writing up your thesis before seeking advice, as you will be under too much pressure at that stage.**