

ULSTER UNIVERSITY

Vice-Chancellor's Research Scholarships – Terms and Conditions 2024-2025

GENERAL

Vice-Chancellor's Research Scholarships are tenable at any campus of the Ulster University. Normally the PhD researcher is located on the campus of their first named supervisor. Researchers wishing to take up the offer of this scholarship must register as a full-time PhD researcher on a programme of research studies leading to the award of the degree of PhD. Scholarships are awarded for up to a maximum of three years and the award will be coterminous with the recipient's period of full-time study.

ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for an award:

- A candidate should hold, or expect to hold, by 15 August of the year of application, a first or upper second class Honours degree (or equivalent) in a subject area closely related to the project to be undertaken. Other additional conditions may be set depending on the discipline and these will be advertised where applicable.
- Candidates who already hold a doctoral degree or who have been registered on a programme of research leading to the award of a doctoral degree on a full-time basis for more than one year (or part-time equivalent) are NOT eligible for a Research Scholarship.

CONDITIONS OF THE AWARD

The PhD researcher must sign an undertaking to:

- abide by the rules and regulations for the degree of PhD as outlined in the Research Studies Guide;
- abide by the Postgraduate Awards Terms and Conditions and the Researcher's Acceptance and Undertaking;
- accept the conditions of the University's Code of Practice on Intellectual Property Rights;
- devote him/herself to full-time study or training under the direction of the appointed supervisors throughout the period of the award;
- provide the University with full information concerning changes in circumstances which may affect the progress and payment of the scholarship;
- inform the University of withdrawal from study or training, or any absence (in excess of 14 days) through accident or illness;

- repay to the Doctoral College, any amount by which sums paid during the tenure of the award exceed (for whatever reason) any grant payable in respect of that period and/or agree that the Ulster University deduct from subsequent payment(s); and
- inform the University if s/he takes up paid employment or commences another postgraduate course prior to the end of the tenure of the award. PhD researchers who take up employment outside the above regulations may be asked to withdraw from the programme and/or lose entitlement to funding.

It is a condition of this award that the PhD researcher remains on the programme of study in respect of which the award was made. Continued payment of the award is subject to the satisfactory progress of the PhD researcher and successful annual review.

VALUE OF THE AWARD

This scholarship comprises the following:

- All tuition fees for a maximum period of three years.
- Annual maintenance allowance £19,237 for 2024-2025 (which may be subject to annual adjustment in subsequent years).

NATIONAL INSURANCE AND INCOME TAX

For the purposes of National Insurance Contributions and Income Tax, PhD researchers are considered students; they are not employed by the University.

The University will not make any payment for the PhD researcher's National Insurance contributions in relation to this award. The PhD researcher may become liable for contributions in connection with any paid teaching or demonstrating or other work undertaken during the course of study.

The University will not make any deductions from the award or any payment to the Inland Revenue in respect of the award. The PhD researcher should note that normally such awards are not regarded as income for tax purposes. However, any tax liability will be affected by other sources of income and information on the award should be provided to the Inland Revenue if requested. Tax liability is a matter between the PhD researcher and the Inland Revenue.

PAYMENT OF MAINTENANCE ALLOWANCE

Payment of the maintenance allowance will be made on a monthly basis on the last Thursday of each month. Payments will be made directly into the PhD researcher's bank account by BACS on receipt of appropriate bank details. PhD researchers must inform the Doctoral College of any change in bank details at least one month in advance of the due date of the next maintenance payment, to avoid occurring bank charges or delays in payments. Any PhD researcher wishing to withdraw from the programme must inform both the Research Director and the Doctoral College at least two weeks prior to the due date of the next payment. The PhD researcher must repay any overpayment.

The initial maintenance payment will not be made by the Doctoral College until the PhD researcher's acceptance form has been completed and the PhD researcher has registered with the University. Continued payment of the award is subject to the satisfactory progress of the PhD researcher throughout the programme, as assessed from the PhD researcher's annual reports.

If the Doctoral College does not receive these reports by the end of May in each year, maintenance payments will be suspended until the report is received. Additionally, supervisors will inform the Doctoral College immediately if at any time they consider a PhD researcher's attendance, conduct or progress to be unsatisfactory. In such cases, the University reserves the right to terminate the award or reduce or withhold award payments.

HOLIDAYS

The PhD researcher is entitled to up to a maximum of eight weeks (40 days) holidays per annum (1 October – 30 September), to include days when the University is closed and public holidays. Holidays for incomplete years will be allowed pro rata. Where holidays in excess of those permitted are taken, payment for maintenance may be reduced accordingly. All holidays must be negotiated with the PhD researcher's supervisors in the first instance and no holiday may be taken without the supervisors' approval. Holiday leave may not be carried over into the next year.

ABSENCE DUE TO ACCIDENT OR ILLNESS

If a PhD researcher is absent through accident or illness for more than two weeks the Doctoral College must be notified and a medical certificate must be presented. Return from such absences must also be reported. Frequent short absences for medical or other reasons must also be reported to the Doctoral College.

Scholarship payments will continue for absences covered by a medical certificate for up to thirteen weeks within a rolling 12-month period. If the illness lasts for more than thirteen weeks, the studentship will be suspended for the period beyond the thirteen weeks.

The studentship will be extended by the same amount of time (up to 13 weeks). After this time, a phased return to study over a four-week maximum may be permitted.

Holiday entitlement may not be set against periods of illness.

Student visa holders must also take into account UKVI regulations that apply to absences from studies because they may affect sponsorship of Student visas.

MATERNITY LEAVE, ADOPTION LEAVE AND MATERNITY SUPPORT LEAVE

Student visa holders planning to take maternity, adoption or maternity support leave must also take into account UKVI regulations that apply to absences from studies because they may affect sponsorship of Student visas.

Maternity and Adoption Leave

PhD researchers are entitled to 52 weeks' maternity leave if the expected week of childbirth will occur during the period of their award. The earliest maternity leave can commence is 11 weeks

before the expected week of childbirth. The first 26 weeks will be paid at full stipend rate. The following 13 weeks will be paid at a level commensurate with statutory maternity pay. The final 13 weeks are not paid.

The PhD researcher is required to provide a maternity certificate, form MATB1, obtained from a doctor or midwife, which includes the estimated due date (EDD).

Adoption leave will be granted on the same basis as maternity leave to one adopting parent only. The PhD researcher is required to provide a letter from the agency with the date of placement and matching certificate.

Periods of paid and unpaid maternity/adoption leave must be taken consecutively. If a PhD researcher chooses not to take the full 12 months at the time of pregnancy/adoption, then they will not be able to take the remaining period at a later date.

The total period of support will not be extended beyond the original duration of the scholarship plus the period of up to 12 months' maternity/adoption leave, except where more than one maternity/adoption leave occurs during the period of the scholarship.

Maternity Support Leave

Partners of those taking maternity or adoption leave are entitled to up to two weeks' paid maternity support leave on full stipend. This leave must be taken in one go. Maternity support leave cannot start before the birth and must end within 56 days of the birth. This period is regarded as additional leave of absence from studies and the award will not be extended. If the student needs to take any further time, this must be taken as a suspension to the award. The PhD researcher should provide evidence of the birth including birth certificate(s).

DEMONSTRATING, TEACHING AND OTHER PAID WORK

The PhD researcher must abide by the Regulations for the degree of PhD as follows:

A full-time candidate for a degree of PhD shall not undertake or continue any remunerative employment unless:

- the work consists of demonstrating within the University or teaching or other forms of work directly related to the candidate's programme of work; and
- the total demand on the candidate's time, including preparation and travelling, does not exceed six hours a week unless he/she has obtained the prior approval of the Senate.

PhD researchers who take up employment outside the above regulations may be asked to withdraw from the programme and/or lose entitlement to funding.

ATTENDANCE

It is expected that a full-time candidate for the degree of PhD will be in attendance at the University on a daily basis except by agreement with his or her supervisors and Postgraduate Tutor. A record of all absences will be kept by the Faculty.

SUSPENSION OF SCHOLARSHIP

It is expected that the scholarship is held on a continuous basis. The PhD researcher should consult the Research Studies Guide for the regulations relating to leave of absence.

Suspensions **will not** be granted for the following reasons:

- i. employment, temporary lectureships, exchanges, voluntary service overseas or expeditions/sport; and
- ii. suspensions will not normally be granted on the grounds of financial hardship.

TERMINATION OF SCHOLARSHIP

The Doctoral College will continue to issue maintenance payments to PhD researchers, based on continued satisfactory progress. Supervisors will inform the Doctoral College immediately if at any time they consider a PhD researcher's attendance, conduct or progress to be unsatisfactory. In such cases, the University reserves the right to terminate the award or reduce or withhold award payments.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

The PhD researcher is bound by the University policy and procedures on Intellectual Property that may arise out of their research work. These procedures are available online [here](#).

The PhD researcher is also required to read and complete the Intellectual Property Rights document included with the admissions materials. This document should be returned to the Doctoral College at registration.