

## Student Visa/Tier 4 Guidance for Students

Academic Year 2023/34

### Postgraduate Research Students holding a Student or Tier 4 Visa

#### Contents

1. Why Does the University Need to Monitor my Engagement? .....	2
2. How Will the University Monitor my Engagement? .....	2
3. What Happens if my Scheduled Meeting Cannot Take Place Due to Staff Absence or Annual Leave? .....	3
4. Do PGR Students Have any Authorised Leave? .....	3
5. What Will Happen if I Miss a Scheduled Meeting? .....	3
6. What if I Need to Study Away from the Campus (for Example to Conduct Data Collection)? .....	4
7. What if I Require a Longer Break from Study? .....	4
8. What Happens if my Visa Sponsorship is Withdrawn? .....	5
9. Who can I Contact for Further Information Relating to my Visa or If I Have any Questions Regarding the Engagement Monitoring Process for Student/Tier 4 Visa Holders? .....	5

## Student Visa/Tier 4 Guidance for Students

*Academic Year 2023/34*

### Postgraduate Research Students holding a Student or Tier 4 Visa

#### **1. Why Does the University Need to Monitor my Engagement?**

To allow students from all over the world to study with us on campus, the University holds a Student Sponsor License, provided by the Home Office UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) department.

This licence is a privilege and not a right; therefore, the University must ensure that its policies and procedures are in line with overarching guidance issued by UKVI, and any failure to do so could impact our ability to continue sponsoring students to study with us in Aberdeen.

Furthermore, as a Student/Tier 4 visa holder, you have a responsibility to ensure you meet the conditions of your visa, one of which is to engage with your studies actively and consistently throughout your time at the University of Aberdeen. If you cannot adhere to any of your visa responsibilities, the University may not be able to continue sponsoring your visa, which could have a detrimental impact on your ability to complete your studies with us.

UKVI do not permit studying by blended or distance learning for any student on a Student/Tier 4 visa, and therefore another condition of your visa is that you are engaged with study in Aberdeen throughout your Research programme.

#### **2. How Will the University Monitor my Engagement?**

Given the requirement for students to be actively and consistently engaging with their studies in Aberdeen, we have a single method of ensuring that our visa holders are meeting this condition, which is a monthly in-person meeting scheduled with a member of your Supervisory team.

The dates on which you should attend your in-person meeting should be organised between yourself and your supervisor, but they should generally not take place any more than 4-5 weeks apart. It is important that you are proactive in organising these meetings, as they are a requirement of your visa.

Following this meeting, both you and the supervisor should sign your engagement log to confirm that you have met in-person and briefly summarise the points of discussion. This form will then be returned to your school administrator to maintain in your engagement file.

Your monthly monitoring form must be fulfilled until any corrections are signed off and you are formally awarded your PhD or Research award. During any period of corrections, as your supervised study has ended, you may be asked to sign-in with your administrator once per month in lieu of meeting your supervisor, however this is at the discretion of your school. Please also note that post-viva you are still classed as a full-time on-campus student for the purpose of your Student visa, and

## **Student Visa/Tier 4 Guidance for Students**

*Academic Year 2023/34*

therefore you must also adhere to the 20 hours per week employment condition of your visa.

### ***3. What Happens if my Scheduled Meeting Cannot Take Place Due to Staff Absence or Annual Leave?***

Where possible, a meeting should be arranged within a similar timescale with another member of your supervisory team, but where this is not possible, you should ensure you sign-in with your school administrator as an alternative. Please note that this option should only be used on an exceptional basis.

### ***4. Do PGR Students Have any Authorised Leave?***

PGR students have a balance of 60 calendar days to use for authorised leave per 12 months. The amount of leave you have is calculated on a rolling basis, starting on the date that you register to commence your PhD.

This leave can be used as you wish – for example, if you are ill or simply wish to take a break from study. It is important to submit this form as soon as you are aware that you will need to be absent from study for any length of time, and ideally in advance of the absence (although we appreciate in the case of instances such as illness this may not always be possible).

Please note that any authorised leave not taken within the 12-month period will not be rolled over to the next 12-month period.

### ***5. What Will Happen if I Miss a Scheduled Meeting?***

If you miss a scheduled meeting and do not have approved authorisation to be absent from study as per the above process and form, your school administrator will apply a C6 to your student record.

It is important that you provide justification for your absence within 8 days of the email sent from Registry confirming your C6 has been applied, as failure to do so will result in your C6 turning to a C7, which can result in removal of your Student visa sponsorship and therefore your ability to complete your studies within the UK. Further details on how non-engagement could impact your student visa is detailed within question 8 below.

## Student Visa/Tier 4 Guidance for Students

Academic Year 2023/34

### **6. What if I Need to Study Away from the Campus (for Example to Conduct Data Collection)?**

It is important that you request prior authorisation for any period whereby you are required to study outside of Aberdeen. This could be due to data collection, the need to attend a conference, or any other academic reason related to your research.

Please note that this authorisation is required for any period of study outside of the Aberdeen area (for example if you needed to temporarily relocate elsewhere in the UK to conduct academic activity), and there must be an academic need for you to be located elsewhere temporarily. Off-campus forms should not be completed if you need to return overseas for a family visit or holiday. You should request authorised leave from your 60-day allowance instead. Any length of time spent overseas for non-academic reasons must be authorised via the authorised absence form, and cannot exceed 60 days in length.

The University has an off-campus form which must be completed in advance of your travel, ideally six or more weeks prior to your intended travel date. Please ensure that on the form you clearly detail the rationale for your off-campus study, how long you will be away for (precise dates are required), and the exact location of where you will be studying. The University is required to update UKVI of any student that studies off-campus, however this will not impact your visa sponsorship providing you inform the University in advance of your off-campus period starting, and you receive the necessary authorisation from your School.

During your off-campus study period, you should continue to engage at least once per month with your supervisor, and this should be recorded on your monthly monitoring form as a digital entry.

The University maintains the right to reject any off-campus request which does not meet the academic criteria or is submitted after your off-campus period has started. This may impact our ability to continue sponsoring your visa should you continue to study off-campus despite not receiving approval.

### **7. What if I Require a Longer Break from Study?**

You may request a suspension of study (this will extend your submission date in line with the amount of time you have suspended for); however, the suspension route should only be utilised in extenuating circumstances, for example during a period of ill health or bereavement of a close family member (which can be supported with evidence). Please note that suspensions of study should not be requested for personal holidays/family visits or employment purposes, and authorised leave from your 60-day allowance should be utilised instead.

The maximum amount of time we can permit an exceptional circumstances period of suspension for (if you wish to retain your Student Visa whilst on a suspension of study) is 60 days throughout the duration of your PhD. We must also have reasonable confidence that you will still be on track to complete your PhD on or before your visa expiry date. If it is determined from an academic point of

## Student Visa/Tier 4 Guidance for Students

Academic Year 2023/24

view that your suspension will impact your study timeline in such a way that you will no longer be able to complete your PhD before your visa expires, the University maintains the right to withdraw your visa sponsorship during your study suspension; this will require you to leave the UK to make a new Student Visa application if you wish to return to the UK to complete your studies.

### **8. What Happens if my Visa Sponsorship is Withdrawn?**

If your visa sponsorship is withdrawn (for example due to an extended suspension of study), you will be notified of this by email from the Student Immigration Compliance Team ([immigration@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:immigration@abdn.ac.uk)).

Once we have withdrawn sponsorship of your visa, you do not immediately need to leave the UK, however we advise that you make plans to depart the UK as soon as you can. UKVI may issue you with a visa curtailment notice, which can be at any point after your visa sponsorship has been withdrawn. The curtailment notice is usually sent to your personal email address that you noted in your visa application, along with your UK address. Your curtailment letter will provide you with a date on which you must leave the UK by.

It is very important to ensure that you leave the UK on or before the date issued on your curtailment notice; any further stay in the UK beyond this date will result in you being considered an overstayer which may have serious consequences for future visa applications to live, work or study in the UK.

If you require Student visa sponsorship to return to study in the UK, please ensure that you contact the International Student Advisers ([student.international@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:student.international@abdn.ac.uk)) approximately 3 months prior to your intended return to study to begin the CAS issuance process.

Please note that the University does not guarantee issuance of CAS, and this depends on whether a student can meet the eligibility criteria for CAS issuance (such as holding the correct financial evidence, ATAS clearance, TB test certificate if applicable), and dependant on whether the student has previously engaged fully in their studies and adhered to the monitoring process in place.

### **9. Who can I Contact for Further Information Relating to my Visa or If I Have any Questions Regarding the Engagement Monitoring Process for Student/Tier 4 Visa Holders?**

The Student Immigration Compliance Team are available to contact to discuss any matter relating to the engagement monitoring process for Student/Tier 4 Visa holders and can be reached via [email](#).

We also have some helpful advice and guidance on our [webpage](#).

The [UK Council for International Student Affairs](#) is also a great source of information and guidance on a variety of matters affecting international students.

**Student Visa/Tier 4 Guidance for Students**

*Academic Year 2023/34*

