

Responsibilities of the Head of School, Supervisor and Director of PGR Programmes. Additional guidance for the 2020-21 academic year in response to Covid-19

The information outlined in this document supplements the guidance and responsibilities for Head of School and supervisors which can be found in the [Research Degree Programmes](#) section of the Quality Manual.

Heads of School should ensure that:

For new PGRs

1. Supervisors and PGR Programme Directors (or their equivalent) are planning for programme to start as usual at the beginning of the academic session.
2. Deferred entry for PGRs should only be used if there is no reasonable alternative for starting study, for example (but not limited to) if neither attendance in person, nor remote studyⁱ is appropriate or feasible.
3. In the event of a PGR studying remotely for a period of time where there is no current requirement for physical access to on-campus research facilities, there are appropriate remote supervisory arrangements in place to support the PGR's research progress and enable engagement with appropriate training and development opportunities.

For both new and continuing PGRs

4. PGRs are included in research planning and their particular requirements are considered where decisions on forward planning and responses to changed circumstances are taken at a local level, e.g. building re-entry, access to research facilities, and restarting research. Along with other researchers they should be explicitly factored into plans for increasing building capacity over the coming months.
5. All School level changes and decisions that affect researchers are directly communicated to PGRs to ensure that they are not overlooked.
6. PGRs have a high priority for re-starting/commencing research activity, bearing in mind that study towards an academic research degree is regarded as a priority for research recovery and PGRs work to tight deadlines while facing financial constraints.
7. Consideration is made for new PGR and continuing PGRs whose research needs rapid restart in order to progress, in order to manage their expectations and ensure that they are supported to effectively plan their research and where necessary adapt to changing circumstances.
8. All new and continuing PGRs receive direct notification from the School of the date from which they will be able to access local research buildings and facilities, before the start of session 2020-21.
9. All new and continuing PGRs should receive an induction/reorientation to new ways of working on campus, including University, Faculty and School policies and procedures relating to Covid-19 safety.
10. Where possible all PGRs other than those in Thesis Pending or undertaking remote study, will be in at least partial attendance on campus, and able to access necessary research facilities by January 1st. If this is not possible, for example if there are

changes in circumstances or guidance, then an explanation for delay should be given to PGRs, including the reason for later entry to research facilities.

11. Due consideration is given to the impact of remote study and home working on particular groups of PGRs, with centrally managed processes put in place through which PGRs can contact the School with problems and challenges, including confidential issues, so that these can be rapidly addressed and resolved.
12. Where possible, there is provision of bookable PGR study space within Schools, in recognition that some PGRs do not have home environments conducive for long term home study/working.
13. There are appropriate mechanisms for PGR representation in the School, and routes for raising issues and problems with the School leadership team, including election of PGR programme representatives.
14. Supervisors have engaged with training in effective online/remote supervisory practice. In the first instance this should be through reference to the [Guide to Online Supervision produced by the UK Council for Graduate Education](#).

Responsibilities of School and PGR Training Programme Directors.

School PGR Directors are the leads for PGR programmes in Schools (PhD, MPhil, MRes etc.), and in conjunction with Directors of Doctoral Training Cohorts, are responsible for deciding, enacting and communicating all changes in PGR programmes to both new starters and continuing PGRs.

School and DTP/CDT PGR Directors should ensure that:

1. Even if plans are not yet finalised, detailed information relating to programme changes are directly communicated to all new and continuing PGRs as soon as possible, and before the beginning of the new academic session 2020-21. Information should include what any changes are likely to involve if not yet finalised, how these will affect the individual PGR and what, if any, actions the PGRs need to take.
2. Information on any and all changes such as arrangements for inductions, initial and ongoing supervisory meetings, training and development opportunities, symposia, workshops and annual progression processes, and the potential for alteration of working hours, access to buildings, any expectation for remote working and possible alteration of original research plans due to Covid-19, are communicated directly to PGRs to ensure consistency and accuracy of information.
3. Any and all changes are also communicated to all research supervisors.
4. All supervisors and PGRs are informed that, as with UG and PGT students, the expectation is that supervision is conducted using a blended format, including remote /online and face-to-face formats, when possible and appropriate.
5. Plans are in place for PGR community building across the School/training programme, for the establishment and continuation of good working relationships, and providing a sense of community with effective support structures. This could be through establishing regular community building activities, by necessity initially online but shifting to in person events if and when safe and appropriate.
6. If PGRs cannot travel to Nottingham, remote study is considered as the first alternative rather than deferred start date and that they as well as the PGRs

supervisors are involved in supporting the PGR to access and engage with research training and other opportunities such as seminars.

7. Information on School policies and procedures including any changes due to COVID-19 are easily available to all PGRs, and is communicated to all PGRs and supervisors e.g. through the School PGR handbook. This should include information on PGR support also available outside the School, for example, the careers and employability service, the counselling service, support for mental health and well being etc.

Responsibilities of supervisors

Although many supervisors have shifted to remote/online supervision through necessity since March 2020, very few are currently expert in this method of supervision. All supervisors supervising PGRs at a distance or remotely should therefore ensure that they are familiar with and refer to the [Guide to Online Supervision produced by the UK Council for Graduate Education](#). Supervisors who have not yet supervised a PGR to completion are reminded that they must have an expert co-supervisor in the supervisory team.

Supervisors should also ensure that:

1. If it is proposed that a PGR starts or continues their research remotely (ie at the PGR's request and where appropriate supervisory and other arrangements are in place and the student has no current requirement for the use of on-campus research resources or facilities), that the PGR undertakes all the necessary processes to request remote studyⁱ.
2. They engage with appropriate continuing professional development, including further training in online and distance supervision when made available to ensure excellent and effective supervisory practice.
3. They are familiar with the ongoing changes in the Quality Manual, both in the Research Degree Regulations and the guidance documents, so that they understand the Covid-related changes already in effect and those in process.
4. They communicate all necessary training, safety and building re-entry rules to their PGRs and ensure that their PGRs comply with local Covid-19 rules while working on campus.
5. They are familiar with the University Code of Research conduct, and regulations and guidance on research ethics, and have completed training in research integrity.
6. That they support PGRs to ensure that plans to progress and complete their studies take account of the impact of Covid-19 on research activities, and include consideration of how any risks to the research due to COVID-19 can be mitigated.

ⁱ Remote study means study not in easy commuting distance to Nottingham/ out of the UK. The University's remote study policy can be found at <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/qualitymanual/registration-and-attendance/exceptional-pol-covid-19-remote-study.aspx>