PGR Placement Guidance

Effective 26/27 Academic Year

Guidance maintained by Doctoral College, Registry and Education Service and was approved by UEC in November 2025 and updated in November 2026. (Any queries on this guidance should be directed to doctoralcollege@ncl.ac.uk.)

This document provides guidance in relation to:

- *Doctoral and MPhil students undertaking an integral or optional placement; and*
- *UKVI considerations for Doctoral and MPhil students holding a Student Visa.*

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When arranging a PGR placement, colleagues and students should also refer to the Newcastle Work Based and Placement Learning Policy https://www.ncl.ac.uk/mediav8/our-research/research-governance-policies/work-based-and-placement-learning-policy.pdf

1. Introduction

1.1 PGR placements offer students valuable firsthand experience in research impact and can be an effective way to develop skills, gain insights and experience in a specific area, and enhance career ambitions. Placements are usually undertaken away from the University and could take place in: business; industry; NHS; charities, public sector bodies and another educational institution.

1.2 Placements will vary depending on the choices of the student and the supervisor, the funder and the nature of the placement itself but should offer opportunities for skills development that are different from those obtained in the PhD.

1.3 Placements can be:

- Integral: where the placement must be completed and is a requirement:
  - of the programme of study;
  - of the funding;
  - of the thesis, as it will appear or have the potential to appear directly in the thesis (See Section 2 below).
- Optional: where a placement does not have to be undertaken but where a student may choose to do so for the reasons outlined in Section 1.1. (See Section 4 below).

(Additional guidance is provided for Student Visa Holders in Sections 3 and 5 below and UKRI funded students in Section 5.)

1.4 A period of research undertaken away from the University (on outside study) that is part of the student's research degree project plan is not necessarily considered as a placement, for

example fieldwork, archival visits, visits to an academic collaborator in another institution or Industrial Case partner to learn a technique or access a piece of equipment. A student should discuss this with their supervisor to determine whether an activity is a period of outside study or a placement.

2. Integral placements

2.1 Some PhD students will be required to undertake an integral placement, due to the requirements of their programme of study, their funder or their thesis. In such cases, the placement will be an integral and an assessed component, which must be completed to be eligible for the award of the PhD.

2.2 Where there is an integral placement requirement for a PGR Student Visa holder, the student should be registered on a specific 'PhD with Placement' programme code, which will need to be set up if one does not already exist. This would allow a PGR Student Visa holder to undertake a full-time placement as it would be an integral and assessed part of their programme and clearly indicates to colleagues and UKVI that the student is expected to undertake a placement. The placement requirement would also then be included on the PGR student's Certificate of Acceptance of Studies by PG Admissions.

2.3 The PGR student should submit an outside study request in advance of the integral placement start date and they should ensure they have:

- Agreement from their supervisor (and funder where relevant);
- Completed a travel risk assessment;
- Familiarised themselves with the University's Insurance guidance
- The placement confirmed in writing by the host.

All evidence should be uploaded and attached to the Outside Study form.

2.4 The PGR student would be fully registered during the period of the placement and no changes are normally made to candidature dates. This is particularly important for PGR Student Visa holders so the temporary change can be reported to UKVI.

2.5 During the placement there should be:

- An assigned point of contact at the University, which would normally be a member of the supervisory team, who should maintain regular contact with the PGR student and the host organisation.
- An assigned point of contact/local supervisor/manager at the placement host organisation, who should ensure the PGR student receives appropriate support and guidance and access to relevant facilities and resources.

2.6 A PGR student undertaking a placement should conduct themselves in professional manner and will remain subject to the University's regulations. They should keep their University-assigned contact informed of their progress and of any problems that may arise.

3. Student Visa Holders and Integral Placements

3.1 UKVI require confirmation that work placements meet their requirements to permit full-time work. They must be integral and assessed and not more than 50% of the programme.

3.2 The University (as the PGR Student Visa holder sponsor and the work placement provider) should provide a PGR Student Visa holder with a letter:

- addressed to the PGR Student Visa holder confirming that the work placement forms an integral and assessed part of the programme and does not, by itself or in combination with other periods of work placement, breach the above restrictions;
- including the terms and conditions of the work placement, and the work the PGR Student Visa holder will be expected to do, and how and when they will be assessed.

3.3 The University (and PGR Student Visa holder) should retain the letter as evidence of the work placement and that the work placement restrictions have not been breached.

3.4 Where a placement is an integral and assessed part of the programme, the PGR Student Visa holder can work up to an additional 20 hours. This does not apply to optional placements.

3.5 The University may be liable for a civil penalty if a PGR Student Visa holder is employed by the University and is found to be in breach of their immigration conditions. (Reference 'Work Conditions for a Student' Immigration Rules - Immigration Rules: Appendix Student - Guidance - GOV.UK).

3.6 Any placement undertaken by a PGR Student Visa holder must be in accordance with UKVI rules.

4. Optional Placements

4.1 An optional placement unrelated to the PGR student's research topic is possible and the PGR student can apply for an interruption of studies for the duration of the placement. This process must be followed if a PGR student is in receipt of a studentship and is to be paid full-time by the placement host.

4.2 While a PGR student is on an optional placement they will not be supervised or monitored by the University.

4.3 The PGR student must complete a Mitigation form (and choose the interruption of studies option) on the PGR CoP System to advise the University of the placement details. This should be done in sufficient time so that the application can be considered and approved before the placement start date. Following approval and while on the placement the PGR student will be registered on an interruption of studies and registration and candidature dates would be adjusted in line with the length of the interruption.

4.4 Before the PGR student completes the Mitigation form, they should ensure they have:

- Agreement from their supervisor (and funder where relevant);
- Completed a travel risk assessment;
- Familiarised themselves with the University's Insurance guidance
- The placement confirmed in writing by the host.

All evidence should be uploaded and attached to the Mitigation form.

5. PGR Student Visa Holders and Optional Placements

5.1 It would not normally be possible for a PGR Student Visa holder to undertake an optional placement due to immigration regulations, which place restrictions on both the amount of time a PGR Student Visa holder can be on an interruption of studies and on the right to work full time in the UK.

5.2 It may be possible for a PGR Student Visa holder to undertake a part-time placement/work experience in the UK within visa permitted working hours (up to 20 hours per week), alongside their PGR programme. The PGR Student Visa holder should discuss this with their supervisory team in advance of starting any placement/work experience. No interruption of studies would be required, but this would need to be carefully considered to ensure the PGR Student Visa holder's degree programme progress and submission are not put at risk due to the placement/work experience, as candidature dates would remain unchanged.

5.3 When arranging a placement/work experience, a PGR Student Visa holder should be aware that an extension to minimum candidature or thesis submission deadline would not normally be approved due to the placement itself. Any extension request must be supported by compelling reasons beyond the placement itself.

5.4 Where the placement/work experience is located away from Newcastle, the PGR Student Visa holder should complete an outside study form to advise the University of the temporary change of location.

5.5 An alternative option could be to use annual leave to take a full-time placement/work experience in the UK of up to one month. No extra time would be provided as the PGR Student Visa holder would remain registered. Annual leave should be requested via the Student Portal - absence form.

5.6 It may be possible for a PGR Student Visa holder to undertake a placement/work experience outside of the UK (subject to working restrictions in that country), in which case the PGR Student Visa holder could consider the following options:

Full-time Placement

- Apply for an interruption of studies for the period of a full-time placement if it is 60 days or less, as interruptions are strictly limited to 60 days for a PGR Student Visa holder. Any interruption longer than 60 days would result in the cancellation of the PGR student's current visa, and they would need to apply for a new visa to return to the UK in future.

Part-time Placement

- Apply for outside study for the duration of the part-time placement (subject to working restrictions in the placement country). The placement would be undertaken alongside the research degree project and no extension would be given to the thesis submission deadline as a result of taking on the optional part-time placement.

6.7 A PGR Student Visa holder should seek advice from the Visa Team before agreeing to any optional placement/work experience opportunity.

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Support and further information

FMS Graduate School

- Translational & Clinical Research Institute: TCRIpgenquiries@newcastle.ac.uk
- Newcastle Biosciences Institute: NUBIpgenquiries@newcastle.ac.uk
- Population Health Sciences Institute: PHSIpgenquiries@newcastle.ac.uk

HaSS and SAgE Graduate School – gradschool@ncl.ac.uk

Visa Support – visa@ncl.ac.uk

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Appendix – Specific Placement Opportunities

UKRI Placement Opportunities

A UKRI funded PGR student may undertake a placement or internship where this is either directly related to their training and/or provides valuable transferable skills, provided this is well justified and approved in advance by their Supervisor and Research Organisation.

The placement may be an integral and assessed part of the funding, in which case an interruption or an extension of the studentship funded period is not required. In other cases, there may be a case for the studentship funded period to be extended.

Where a placement is not directly part of the PhD programme or the PGR student is receiving a payment for the placement from the placement provider, then studentship funding should be suspended.

Each Research Council and/or Doctoral Training Grant has different placement schemes as part of their studentship funding. An overview of current schemes is provided below, however, further details and advice should be sought from Doctoral Training Grant leads.

PGR Student Visa holders should also refer to **Section 5 - Student Visa Holders and Optional Placements** on whether a UKRI optional placement would be possible within the terms of their visa.

UKRI

UKRI has an annual Policy Internship scheme which allows the PGR student to remain registered whilst on a 3-month placement and provides a funded extension for the placement period.

The source of the extension funding is Research Council dependent and is set out in the link below: https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/ukri-policy-internships-2026/ The PGR student would need to apply for outside study in advance of the placement start date and would be registered on outside study during the placement.

- This would be classed as an optional placement.

AHRC Northern Bridge

The funding award length is 3.5 years and there is an optional placement which can be either:

- 6-month full-time placement
- 12-month part-time placement

As this is an optional placement, it may not be possible for a Student Visa Holder to undertake such a placement. (Please refer to **Section 5 - Student Visa Holders and Optional Placements.)**

Additional funding for a 'reasonable' accommodation and travel costs is provided. The amount is dependent on whether the placement is remote, or full-time or part-time. No additional stipend funding is provided.

- The PGR student would need to apply for outside study in advance of the placement start date and would be registered on outside study during the placement.
- A PGR student is unable to start a placement during the last 6 months of their funded period.

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BBSRC NLD DTP and NEEDL (North-East England Doctoral Landscape)

All students are funded for 4 years and there is a compulsory 3-month PIPS (Professional Internships for PhD Students) unrelated to a student's PhD studies. *(Students need to find their own PIPS placement. There is an annual cohort event in the NLD DTP and the NEEDL DLA that is focused on providing them with the skills and training to do this.)*

This is integral to the PhD and the University has to report to BBSRC, who are strict about completion of the PIPS.

- PGR Student Visa holders will be registered on a 'PhD with Placement' code in their respective Academic Unit. This information will be included in the studentship offer letter and on the CAS.
- The PGR student would be registered on outside study during the placement.

EPSRC Industrial Doctoral Landscape Awards (IDLA)

These awards are in industry led, therefore it is expected that the PGR student will have regular contact with the external partner to undertake the proposed project. This can include regular visits to access their sites to access research facilities.

Some collaborations may include a longer visit as a study placement and should be taken as a period of Outside study. Further information is available here: EPSRC-09052024-ICASE-tips-and-considerations-for-industry.pdf

EPSRC Centres for Doctoral Training (CDTs/DFA)

If an external partner is involved there is some expectation that a placement will be provided. All other PGR students can request a placement via the Training Grant's flexible funds.

These awards are funded for 4 years, and the placement should be factored into the 4-year PhD candidature.

- The PGR student would need to apply for outside study in advance of the placement start date and would be registered on outside study during the placement.

EPSRC Doctoral Landscape Award (DLA)

Placements are not integral and are funded via the DLA Flexible funds.

From 2025/26, DLA awards are funded for 4 years, so any optional placement should be factored into the 4-year PhD candidature.

- The PGR student would need to apply for outside study in advance of the placement start date and would be registered on outside study during the placement.

ESRC NINE DTP 1

Placements are optional and are therefore not integral. As such, it may not be possible for a Student Visa Holder to undertake such a placement. (Please refer to **Section 3 - Student Visa Holders and Integral Placements and Section 5 – Student Visa Holders and Optional Placements.)**

- A PGR student who is undertaking a placement may apply for a 3-month funded extension and additional funds to complete a placement.
- The PGR student would need to apply for outside study in advance of the placement start date and would be registered on outside study during the placement.
- A PGR student must complete the placement before the final three months of the studentship.

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ESRC NINE DTP 2

Available award routes:

- PhD only – Funded for 3 years and 6 months
- PhD + PG Cert in Research Training – Funded for 4 years
- Masters + PhD – Funded for 4 years and 6 months
- 4 years and 6 months/ 5 years/ 5 years and 6 months - only available to students on the Language Based Area Studies pathway.

There is an expectation that ESRC NINE DTP 2 funded students undertake a placement and this would be considered as an integral placement.

- PGR Student Visa holders will be registered on a 'PhD with Placement' code in their respective Academic Unit. The placement information will be included in the studentship offer letter and on the CAS.
- The studentship funding will include the 3-month integrated placement period, however, if a placement has not been undertaken within the last 6 months of studentship funding, the PGR's studentship funding will be reduced by 3 months. (If they are a PGR Student Visa holder they will be transferred on to the normal PhD programme.)
- The PGR student will need to apply for outside study in advance of the placement start date and will be registered on outside study during the placement. If the placement is undertaken during the PGR student's minimum candidature period (e.g. 3 years for a full-time student), a 3-month extension to minimum candidature would be applied to the student's record. *(Note: There will normally be a difference between an ESRC NINE DTP 2 student's funding end date and the University thesis submission deadline, which is usually later. However, as ESRC NINE DTP 2 funded students are expected to submit at the end of their studentship funded period, it is, therefore, unlikely that a PGR student undertaking a placement would require an extension of time to their University thesis submission deadline because of the placement.)*
- A PGR student is unable to start a placement in the last 6 months of funding.

MRC

All students are funded for 4 years and placements are not integral.

If a PGR student wishes to undertake a placement, the Training Grant can use its flexible support fund to cover the placement costs, subject to funding caps and limits. *(Decisions are made by the Funding Management Board and there may be additional requirements. Any interested PGR student should contact the Training Grant lead for information on the application process.)*

A PGR student would be encouraged to undertake the placement once the thesis has been submitted.

- The PGR student would need to apply for an interruption of studies in advance of the place start date and would be registered on an interruption of studies during the placement.

NERC General Doctoral Landscape Award DLA & DFA

Placements are not integral but are encouraged.

These awards are typically funded for 3 years and 6 months and an additional 3 months of funding can be provided via training grant flexible funds.

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If a PGR student undertakes a placement their funding increases to 3 years and 9 months, but no change is made to candidature dates.

- The PGR student would need to apply for outside study in advance of the placement start date and would be registered on outside study during the placement.

NERC IAPETUS DLA

All students will be expected to undertake a placement that is unrelated to their PhD project, and this would be considered as an integral placement.

- PGR Student Visa holders will be registered on a 'PhD with Placement' code in their respective Academic Unit. The placement information will be included in the studentship offer letter and on the CAS.
- Funding will be offered for 3 years and 9 months, however, if a placement has not been undertaken by the start of the 4th year the PGR student's funding will be reduced to 3 years and 6 months (and if they are a PGR Student Visa Holder they will be transferred onto the normal PhD programme).
- The PGR student would need to apply for outside study in advance of the placement start date and would be registered on outside study during the placement.

Other Schemes

EU MSCA (Marie Sklodowska Curie Actions)

MSCA PhD funding (under Horizon Europe) funds researchers, covering salaries, research costs, and travel. This programme funds PhD students to study and research across Europe and undertake an integral placement at a different institution within their PhD/Employment period.