



POSTGRADUATE RESEARCHER (PGR) SCHEME TERMS AND CONDITIONS (ACADEMIC YEAR 2026/27)

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document sets out the terms and conditions for the Department for the Economy (DfE) funded Postgraduate Researcher Scheme (PGR) Scheme. **These Terms and Conditions may be varied at any time at the discretion of the Department. The Terms and Conditions apply to all DfE funded Postgraduate Students from October 2026.**
- 1.2 The Scheme is administered by Queen's University Belfast (**QUB**) and Ulster University (**UU**) on behalf of the Department. The Universities are responsible for selecting, administering and supervising students throughout their period of training, in accordance with current good practice as detailed in the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education - Advice and Guidance: Research Degrees](#).

General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

- 1.3 The Department and the Universities will handle personal data in accordance with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. Further details are included in the privacy notices below.

[DfE NI PGA scheme - Privacy Notice](#)

[Ulster University - Student Privacy Notice](#)

[Queens University Belfast - Student Privacy Notice](#)

- 1.4 Throughout this document, the term **Department** is used to denote the Department for the Economy, and **University Authority** is used to denote the office within each University that is responsible for making decisions on certain issues. At QUB, the **University Authority** is the Graduate School; at Ulster University the **University Authority** is the Doctoral College, Research and Impact.

The Graduate School

Queen's University Belfast

University Road

BELFAST

BT7 1NN

Tel: (028) 9097 2585

E-mail: pgawards@qub.ac.uk

Or

Ulster University Doctoral College

Ulster University

Cromore Road

Coleraine

Co. Londonderry

BT52 1SA

Tel: (028) 7012 4729

E-mail: researchstudent@ulster.ac.uk

- 1.5 Queries on the terms and conditions, in the first instance, should be addressed to the relevant **University Authority**.

Complaints Procedures

- 1.6 The Universities have procedures in place to support the efficient and satisfactory resolution of complaints from students. Should the student be dissatisfied with how the University is administering the Scheme, these procedures can be used to complain about any aspect of the academic or other services provided by the University during the Studentship.

[QUB Student Complaints procedure](#)
[UU Student Complaints Procedure](#)

- 1.7 Should the University not be able to satisfactorily resolve the complaint; students have the right to escalate the complaint to the [Northern Ireland Public Sector Ombudsman](#) (NIPSO). NIPSO requires that the complainant has exhausted the University's complaint process and that a final response to the complainant has been issued.
- 1.8 The Department also has a complaints procedure if you are unsatisfied with the service provided by Departmental officials.

[DfE complaints procedure | Department for the Economy](#)

Whistleblowing

- 1.9 The University will have clear, well-publicised policies and processes in place that are consistent with good practice, in order to foster a supportive whistleblowing environment. Students who wish to raise a concern should follow the University's Whistleblowing policy in the first instance.

[QUB Whistleblowing Policy](#)
[Ulster University Whistle Blowing Policy](#)

If this would be difficult for any reason, students can raise the matter with the DfE Speak-Up Champion or Fraud and Raising Concerns Branch using the contact details below.

raising.concerns@economy-ni.gov.uk

Further details on how the Department will deal with your concern and more advice and guidance on raising a concern is available at:

[Raising Concerns guidance | Department for the Economy \(economy-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

1.10 This document is also available on the internet at any of the following links:

[Postgraduate Research Degrees | Study | Queen's University Belfast](#)

[The Doctoral College at Ulster](#)

[Department for the Economy Postgraduate Studentships terms and conditions](#)

1.11 Alternative versions of this document are available upon request. Please email Research.Branch@economy-ni.gov.uk and appropriate arrangements will be made as soon as possible.

2.0 TYPES OF DFE FUNDED STUDENTSHIPS

2.1 The Department will fund the following Studentships at either Queen's University Belfast or Ulster University:

- **Research PhD Studentships**
- **Collaborative Awards, including Co-operative Awards in Science and Technology (CAST) (PhD) Studentships.** These Studentships encourage collaboration between academic institutions and private sector industry (CAST) and government departments/agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), charities and voluntary sector organisations. For further details see Appendix A.
- **Taught (MRes) Studentships available at Ulster University only.** If available, these studentships will be advertised by the University. For further details see Appendix B.

Mode and Duration of Studentships

- 2.2 Research PhD Studentships, (including collaborative awards) may be either full or part time. Taught MRes Studentships are full time only. Part-time study is equivalent to 50% of full-time study, unless a reasonable adjustment has been arranged for a disabled student. Stipend payments, tuition fees and leave entitlement will be calculated on a pro-rata basis.
- 2.3 The duration of the Research PhD Studentship and Collaborative Award Studentships will be within any parameters specified by the University, however DfE studentship awards will be based on typically three years duration FTE. Studentships of a three-and-a-half or four-year duration may be available at the discretion of the University where projects are designed and supervised in such a way that Students require a longer term to submit their thesis. This will be defined at the outset of the project. Taught MRes Studentships will not normally be more than 12 months.
- 2.4 The maximum duration of a Research PhD studentship may be reduced by a period equal to any previous period of postgraduate training (other than postgraduate teacher training) or of activity equivalent to postgraduate training undertaken by the student, except where the training was directly relevant to the attainment of a Master's degree (whatever the source of funding).

3.0 VALUE OF STUDENTSHIP

3.1 A DfE funded Studentship consists of:

- a. a stipend paid to the student to cover personal maintenance or living costs.

Research & Collaborative PhD Studentships

2026/27 £21,805 per annum (pro rata for part-time awards)

Taught MRes Studentships

2026/27 £10,903 per annum

- b. payment of the student's approved tuition fees (£5,238 per annum 2026/27 - pro-rata for part-time awards)
- c. Research Training Support Grant (RTSG) Research (PhD) and Collaborative PhD Students may apply for a Research Training Support Grant (RTSG) from the University as a contribution towards incidental costs incurred in the training of research students, e.g. the provision of equipment or consumables **and** any fieldwork, conference, study visits or travel costs incurred by the research student. The **University Authority** will approve requests for grant and allocate this money.
- d. Each University reserves the right to pay more than the DfE stipend rate to Studentship holders (e.g. additional funding associated with CAST awards). If applicable, rates above the DfE stipend will be specified in the letter of offer.
- e. the University may pay other allowances in appropriate cases.
- f. Changes to the minimum Stipend, apply no later than the first Stipend payment due in respect of AY 2026/27.

Approved Fees

- 3.2 Tuition fees will be paid directly by the relevant **University Authority** to the Finance Department at QUB or Ulster University. Only fees incurred during, and with relation to, the period of the Studentship will be paid. **Any additional fees payable after termination of the Studentship are the student's responsibility.**
- 3.3 Charges for accommodation and/or boarding of a student resident in an institution must be paid to the institution by the student.
- 3.4 Charges associated with publication, typing and binding a thesis or dissertation are not included in the approved fees, an allowance having been made for such expenses in fixing the rate of maintenance grant.

- 3.5 Fees for any examination which is taken a second time, or a deposit which is ultimately repayable to the student, are not regarded as approved fees.

Students with Disabilities

- 3.6 Costs to cover visas or the immigration health surcharge (IHS), are the responsibility of the student.
- 3.7 Students with disabilities are encouraged to request reasonable adjustments at the earliest opportunity, including (but not limited) to upon receipt of an offer letter from the University. Reasonable adjustments should be made by the University in a timely fashion. The Studentship may be extended if reasonable adjustments are not in place prior to the student commencing their studies.
- 3.8 Students are encouraged to access support through the University's disability support services to ensure that their individual needs are assessed for their studies and that appropriate reasonable adjustments and supports are put in place. Students who incur additional course-related costs because of a disability, mental health condition, or specific learning difficulty (over and above any reasonable adjustments that can be made by their institution in the first instance), may also avail of support through the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) subject to eligibility.
- 3.9 For students attending Ulster University who have not registered with the University's Disability Services, please contact: studentwellbeing@ulster.ac.uk for further information including eligibility for Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) and to schedule an appointment.
- 3.10 For students attending Queen's University Belfast who have not registered with the University's Accessible Learning Support, please contact: accessiblelearning@qub.ac.uk for further information, including eligibility for Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) and to schedule an appointment.

4.0 OFFER & ACCEPTANCE OF STUDENTSHIP

- 4.1 The **University Authority** will send a Letter of Offer for Studentship to successful candidates and notify unsuccessful candidates. Candidates who are offered Studentships must either decline or accept the offer normally within 10 working days of the date of the Letter of Offer. Failure to do so may result in the Studentship being offered to another candidate.
- 4.2 Studentships begin on 1 October and end on 30 September - regardless of the actual dates of the academic year - unless otherwise stated in the Letter of Offer for the Studentship. Approval for a starting date later than 1 October must be sought by the supervisor from the **University Authority**.
- 4.3 The University will appoint a supervisory team consisting of a minimum of two supervisors for each Studentship holder. Supervisors are required to keep the student's progress under review to ensure that the training will be successfully completed within the period of the DfE Studentship and, where applicable, written up and submitted as a thesis. For TAUGHT MRES STUDENTSHIP holders, the Course Director is expected to carry out these functions as necessary. Any references to supervisor's responsibilities in this document should be taken to include Course Director if appropriate.

Payment of Stipend/ Maintenance Grant

- 4.4 The University Authority will request bank details from students for payments of maintenance grants. Students must inform the relevant University Authority of any change of bank details. Each University Authority will decide the arrangements for payment of maintenance grant and notify Studentship holders accordingly.
- 4.5 The initial maintenance payment will be withheld until the student has fully registered for the programme of study for which the Studentship has been awarded. For Studentships continuing into a second or third year, maintenance payments will be suspended if the relevant University Authority does not receive, at the designated time, the progress report detailed in para 9.1. Continued payment is subject to registration and satisfactory progress.

Tax and National Insurance

- 4.6 Payments made as part of a DfE Studentship are training awards and are not regarded as income for income tax purposes. Earnings received from sources such as teaching and demonstrating may be taxable and should be aggregated with income from any employment when assessing income tax liability in any tax year – this is particularly relevant for the tax year in which the award ends.
- 4.7 It is the student's responsibility to understand their tax liabilities throughout their award. The Department is not able to provide advice on tax, national insurance, pensions or on benefits issues.

- 4.8 No additional payments will be made for Students' National Insurance contributions. Students can, if they wish, pay contributions as non-employed persons. Advice should be sought from HMRC to determine the impact of non-payment of contributions on any future claims for benefit including the basic State Pension.

5.0 CONDITIONS OF STUDENTSHIP

- 5.1 In accepting an offer of a Studentship, the student undertakes to:
- i abide by these terms and conditions of the Studentship and the letter of offer issued by the respective University Authority.
 - ii inform the **University Authority** if you have accepted any other studentship or scholarship for the same programme of study.
 - iii repay to the University any amount overpaid for any reason.
 - iv provide to the relevant **University Authority** such information as it may require concerning changes in academic circumstances which may affect the progress and payment of the Studentship.
 - v permit the relevant **University Authority** to use all information held about the Student for any purposes connected with the Studentship, as detailed in the University Authority's privacy notice.
 - vi comply with the conditions on Acknowledgement, Dissemination and Exploitation of Results as set out in Appendix D.
 - vii comply with the researcher commitments in the [Concordat to Support Research Integrity](#) and the provisions of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 as set out in Appendix E; and
 - viii comply with Health and Safety Risk Assessments where appropriate. The University is responsible for ensuring a safe working environment for all individuals associated with any research activity funded by the Department, both on and off-site, and for meeting all regulatory and legislative health and safety requirements.
- 5.2 It is a condition of the Studentship that the Department accepts no liability for the manner in which the work in connection with the Studentship is undertaken, and the recipient of the Studentship will be responsible in all aspects for the work, including fieldwork, and the consequences of it.
- 5.3 The research undertaken by the student as part of a Studentship must fall within the remit described by the funding opportunity for which the award was issued. **Any proposal by a student to change the research topic or mode of study must be approved in advance by the relevant University Authority for the purpose of the Studentship.** Failure to seek prior approval may necessitate the recovery of sums already paid in relation to the Studentship by the University.

Place of Tenure

- 5.4 The Studentships are tenable only at the 'home' University, i.e the University which made the offer of the Studentship, being either Queen's University Belfast or Ulster University.
- 5.5 The Studentship is non-transferable between Queen's University Belfast or Ulster University, except in exceptional circumstances where prior written approval from the University Authorities and the Department has been obtained.
- 5.6 All students are required to be resident in Northern Ireland for the majority of their studies and any time spent overseas should be for the purposes of fieldwork, study visits or conference attendance.
- 5.7 Prior approval must be obtained from the relevant **University Authority** if a student's supervisor advocates a period of study away from the 'home' University for purposes directly related to the project.

Attendance on Campus

- 5.8 The Student must live within a reasonable travel time of their University campus to maintain regular contact with their Faculty/School and their Supervisor. This is to ensure that the student receives the full support, mentoring, training and access to facilities required to complete their research successfully and to a high standard.
- 5.9 It is expected that students will be in attendance on campus daily except by mutual agreement with the student's supervisor, or for time spent on fieldwork, industrial placement, internship or other work directly related to the project for which prior written agreement has been obtained from the relevant **University Authority**.

6.0 LEAVE ENTITLEMENT

- 6.1 Students must comply with the University Authority's policy on leave and apply directly to the University Authority for a period of any type of leave including annual, family, medical and additional leave.

Annual Leave

- 6.2 During the period of the studentship, students are entitled to a paid annual leave entitlement of 40 days per year to include public holidays and University closure periods (pro rata for part time students or students whose funding dates are outside the normal academic year cycle). Students are required to seek approval from their supervisor/course director in advance of taking annual leave. A Student must not study during leave absences.
- 6.3 Where holidays in excess of those permitted are taken, the stipend will be reduced accordingly. Not more than four weeks may be taken on completion of the period of training/study. Where a student withdraws from studies, no holidays will be allowed after the date of withdrawal. Holidays must not be used for the purpose of undertaking paid employment except as approved by the relevant **University Authority** under Section 8 – Demonstrating, Teaching and Other Paid Work.

Family Leave

- 6.4 Students are entitled to apply for the following family leave. Further details and eligibility criteria are set out at Appendix C.
- Maternity leave
 - Partner's or Paternity Leave (leave for partners following the birth of a child).
 - Adoption Leave
 - Neonatal Care Leave
 - Parental Leave (no stipend)
 - Death during a period of maternity

Medical Leave

- 6.5 Medical leave should be used for any circumstances by which a student is deemed unfit to study. It may also be used to provide paid leave to attend medical appointments where flexible study is not possible. Holiday entitlement may not be set against periods of illness. Examples of leave that can be supported under Medical Leave are:
- Sick leave (including both physical and mental health)
 - Pregnancy related illness
 - Antenatal appointments
 - Fertility treatment – a Student experiencing fertility issues and has been medically advised that they require leave, including (but not limited to) undergoing fertility treatment

- Disability- related illness (including chronic illness)
- Disability-related appointments (including for chronic illness) e.g diagnosis, therapy or treatment
- Gender reassignment – a student undertaking gender reassignment and has been medically advised that they require leave.

- 6.6 Further details on the eligibility criteria for Medical Leave can be found in Appendix C.
- 6.7 Students who are absent for more than 28 weeks are advised to seek financial support from the University Support Funds.
- 6.8 For International students whose right to remain in the UK is by virtue of a Student Visa (or previously a Tier 4 Visa), the obligation to permit, for example, 12 months leave for maternity, to permit sickness leave and payment is subject to any restrictions on remaining in the UK, and payment of funding imposed by virtue of the legislation and guidance relating to the granting of the Student Visa (or Tier 4 visa). The University is likely to be required by UK Visas and Immigration to stop sponsorship of a Student visa if the student is taking an absence for more than 60 days. Visa holders are advised to take advice on possible implications for their visa if they require an extended period of absence.

Additional Leave

- 6.9 Additional leave may be provided to cover specific instances where a Student may be required to be absent from study that are not covered by other types of leave. Further details on the eligibility criteria for additional leave can be found at Appendix C. These include:
- Special leave (including bereavement and pregnancy loss)
 - Baby loss (including stillbirth and neonatal death)
 - Carer's leave
 - Additional disability leave associated with delayed adjustments
 - Health and safety
 - Public duties

Return to Study

- 6.10 The University is required to have a policy in place to provide appropriate support for Students returning to study after a period of family, medical or additional leave.
- 6.11 Students returning to study after a period of family, medical or additional leave, may be offered a period of phased return. The amount of time that a student will study during the period of phased return will be detailed in an agreement which will be reviewed periodically (normally every four weeks). Phased return may be accounted for from any available leave allocation, normally family or medical leave. Where no appropriate family or medical leave is available, annual leave may be used. The Studentship may be extended where this is within the rules on extension.

7.0 CHANGES TO STUDY

- 7.1 Students may request from the University, changes in the mode of study from part-time to full-time or vice-versa. There is no restriction to the number of times a student may request a change to mode of study. This does not apply to Taught MRes students as these are only available on a full-time basis.
- 7.2 Where the Student ceases to continue to study toward a doctoral award, but instead continues to work towards a Master's qualification, the Student will be funded up to the date that their dissertation is first submitted. Otherwise, the award will be terminated from the date that the Student's registration ceases. Any funding paid to cover the period after the Student's registration ceased will be reclaimed.
- 7.3 Students must be formally registered for a PhD before the start of the third year of the Studentship. Studentships are not offered to students whose original intention is to submit for an MPhil. Where it is clear before the start of the third full time equivalent year that a student will be submitting for an MPhil, the Studentship will not be continued into the third year or equivalent. When a student transfers to an MPhil in their third year or equivalent, their Studentship will be terminated immediately.

8.0 DEMONSTRATING, TEACHING AND OTHER PAID WORK

- 8.1 No paid work may be undertaken by full time students during term-time or vacations, except as provided by sub-paragraphs i.; ii. and iii.
- i. It is generally considered desirable that, subject to the approval of the Supervisor/ Course Director, a student should undertake a certain amount of demonstrating or teaching work if the type of postgraduate training is compatible with such work. This work is permitted during the tenure of a Studentship, provided the total demand made on a student's time, including any preparation work, does not exceed 6 hours in any one week or up to one day a week if the teaching is carried out in a school or institution of further education.
 - ii. Other forms of work (e.g. university examination invigilating or marking of University examination scripts) directly related to a student's training will be allowed, on the same conditions as demonstrating, during the hours normally devoted to the student's training.
 - iii. Students must inform their Supervisor/Course Director in advance if they plan to undertake a small amount of paid work, other than that specified in i. and ii. above, provided their Supervisor/Course Director certifies that they have consented to this and that the work, whether in term-time or vacation, will not in any way whatsoever impede or interfere with their progress, research or other training. Part-time work during normal working hours is expected to be the exception rather than the norm and should not exceed 6 hours or up to one day in any one week.
- 8.2 Students must be paid for any demonstrating or teaching work at the usual University rate. Prior to undertaking such duties, students will receive appropriate training. Refer to para 4.6 for further details regarding income tax.
- 8.3 A DfE Studentship cannot be held at the same time as any other award which provides maintenance and fees for postgraduate training. The Department's support will cease from the date on which such an award becomes payable. Students must inform the University of such support as soon as reasonably practicable.

9.0 PROGRESS/TERMINATION OF STUDENTSHIP

- 9.1 The PhD and CAST Research Studentships are renewed on an annual basis, subject to a satisfactory progress report, as designated in the rules and regulations for the specific programme, and recommendations from the Supervisor and the School/Faculty.
- 9.2 Students can apply to the relevant University Authority for reasonable adjustments to be made to support their progress.
- 9.3 Students whose attendance, progress or conduct is not satisfactory may have their Studentships terminated or payments in respect of Studentships withheld or reduced.
- 9.4 If a student has wilfully failed to provide information or has provided information which is known to be false, the University may terminate the Studentship or withhold any payments due under the Studentship as it deems appropriate.
- 9.5 In the event of grievance procedures or terminating a Studentship before the end of the funded period, a written record will be maintained by the University to demonstrate that the University's procedures are followed and that the matter is dealt with in a manner that is transparent and fair. Students may have a companion at any grievance meeting.
- 9.6 Students who wish to withdraw from their studies should inform the University immediately.
- 9.7 A Studentship will terminate on the date when a student ceases training or studies (except as provided in para 6.3) and the student will be required to refund any payments overpaid to the University.

Submission of Thesis

- 9.8 Students should aim to submit their thesis by the end of their funded period and normally no later than one year after their funding end date. For further details regarding thesis submission refer to the University's relevant Study Regulations. Students are required to check with their School for the timeframe for thesis submission.
- 9.9 Students may submit their thesis prior to the end of their award. Where the Student continues to undertake study that is directly linked to their thesis e.g. preparation for viva or helping with a research paper (subject to confirmation by the University), it is permissible to continue their funding until the end of the quarter in which the thesis is first submitted. Where the Student submits on or after the original end date of their award, funding will cease on the original award end date.

Extensions

- 9.10 Unless para 9.12 applies, a Studentship may be extended where the total amount of Medical Leave (excluding minor illnesses) and Additional Leave are over one week and must be extended when the total amount of Medical Leave (excluding minor illnesses) and Additional Leave exceeds one month. The maximum extension for a Studentship of the combined medical leave and additional leave is one calendar year unless a reasonable adjustment is required or the leave is related to baby loss.
- 9.11 It must also be extended for any period of Family Leave. In considering the length of an extension, the impact of the timing and duration of the absence will be considered by the University. The University may agree these without consultation with the Department where the following conditions are met:
- (i) The total extension to the Studentship (which could come from a combination of several separate extension decisions) is of no more than one calendar year OR the total extension would be no more than one calendar year were it not for:
 - (a) a period of Family Leave or leave related to baby loss
- AND
- (ii) the extension is permitted by either the conditions for leave in Section 6 and Appendix C OR is a reasonable adjustment.
- 9.12 An extension will not be provided for a period after the Student has submitted their thesis or equivalent.

Work Experience

- 9.13 Up to three months can be spent working in industry in paid employment, so long as the following conditions are met:
- a. The faculty/school certifies that the work is directly related to the research project.
 - b. The work must not be supported by public funds. The stipend payments made by the University will be suspended during the work experience and the employer/company will be required to remunerate the student during this period. Payment should be commensurate with the student's graduate status. The Studentship end date will NOT be extended by three months.
 - c. The student is not required to withdraw temporarily from research. BEFORE students undertake work experience, Supervisors must provide brief details of the industrial placement and include the endorsement of the Faculty/School. Details must be sent in advance of the work experience placement to the relevant **University Authority** to enable University stipend payments to be suspended.

Employment or Other Postgraduate Study

- 9.14 If a student takes up full time employment before the normal expiry date of the Studentship or commences other postgraduate study in respect of which another Studentship has been made, the DfE Studentship cannot be continued on or after the date of appointment or the date from which employment or the other Studentship commences. The student must inform the University when taking up paid employment or commencing other postgraduate study as soon as reasonably practicable. This paragraph overrides the provision in para 6.3 for holidays after the completion of the period of training/study.

Suspension of Studentship

- 9.15 In general, Studentships are intended to be held on a continuous basis and the relevant **University Authority** will consider suspending a Studentship only in exceptional circumstances. If you wish to submit a request for suspension, you should contact your Supervisor/Course Director as soon as possible. All requests for suspension must take the form of a joint request signed by the student and the Supervisor/Course Director and be accompanied by any supporting evidence, e.g. medical certificates. The request and supporting evidence must be submitted to the Faculty/School for approval. If approved, the Faculty/School will forward the request to the relevant University Authority for decision, confirming that appropriate supporting evidence has been received.
- 9.16 Please note the following with regard to suspensions:
- a. suspensions are not normally available for TAUGHT MRES STUDENTSHIPS under any circumstances – see Appendix B para 1.5 relating to withdrawing from Taught MRes Studentships
 - b. requests for suspension must be received **in advance** of the period of suspension requested
 - c. the total period of suspension during the tenure of an award should not normally exceed **12 months**.

Acceptable reasons for suspension of a Studentship:

- d. **illness**
- e. **compelling personal reasons** that require the student to be absent from the University; and
- f. for the purposes of taking up an internship at a Centre of Excellence or an industrial placement. Only one such placement may be considered during the tenure of the Studentship and must not exceed 12 months' duration.

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

- g. employment, temporary lectureships, exchanges, voluntary service overseas or expeditions/sport (other than representing Northern Ireland, Ireland or the United Kingdom at a major international event following advance consultation and with the explicit agreement of the University); and
- h. Suspensions will not normally be granted on the grounds of financial hardship.

APPENDIX A: COLLABORATIVE STUDENTSHIPS INCLUDING COOPERATIVE AWARDS IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (CAST) STUDENTSHIPS

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Collaborative Studentships encourage partnerships between academic institutions and private sector industries, government departments/agencies, charities and voluntary sector organisations. Each University may create Collaborative Studentships where the University can find a collaborating body for a particular research project.
- 1.2 Where the collaboration is with a private sector industry, the industry partner is required to make a minimum financial contribution, and this type of Collaborative Studentship is known as a CAST award. If the collaboration is with a not-for-profit organisation, the collaborating body may contribute at their discretion.
- 1.3 The collaborating body is not required to be based in the UK.
- 1.4 It is essential that projects should provide good training for the student in methods of research, as well as a stimulating challenge. They should also provide a worthwhile opportunity to spend at least three months of the period of the Studentship with the collaborating body. Projects should be product and/or process orientated.

Collaboration Agreements

- 1.5 The basis of collaboration between the University and the collaborating body or bodies, including the allocation of resources throughout the award (or individual student project as appropriate) and ownership of intellectual property and rights to exploitation, must be set out in a formal collaboration agreement.
- 1.6 This agreement must formalise exactly how any additional collaborating body's contribution is delivered (for example, via the lead industrial collaborating body or directly to the University).
- 1.7 It is the University's responsibility to put such an agreement in place before the relevant project begins. The terms of collaboration agreements must not conflict with DfE's terms and conditions, nor prevent the future progression of research or the dissemination of research results in accordance with academic custom and practice.
- 1.8 The Department is not able to advise on collaboration agreements and intellectual property issues.

Contributions Associated with Collaborative Studentships

- 1.9 As a confirmation of its interest, involvement and commitment the collaborating body must:
- a. **CAST STUDENTSHIPS ONLY.** Make an annual contribution in cash to the University towards the cost of the project, being a minimum of 60% of the minimum maintenance grant (stipend) per annum for the duration of the CAST award. The University is entitled, at its discretion, to use a proportion of this contribution to increase the payment to the student. This approach is strongly supported by the Department.
 - b. Meet the extra expenses (e.g. travel and accommodation costs) incurred by the student as a result of visits to, or time spent with, the collaborating body. This is in addition to the cash contribution in respect of CAST Studentships described in a. above, or any contribution from a non-profit organisation which is made at the organisation's own discretion.
 - c. Provide any necessary special materials or facilities necessary for the successful completion of the Studentship which the universities do not possess.
- 1.10 The collaborating body's contribution is not restricted to the commitments listed above. Expenses can be paid directly to the student or via the University as agreed by the parties involved.
- 1.11 Where there is more than one collaborating body on a project, the lead collaborating body, should be clearly identified in the collaboration agreement.
- 1.12 The lead collaborating body will be responsible for ensuring payment of the contributions listed at a and b above and that the student has all the necessary materials to complete their Studentship as mentioned at c above.
- 1.13 Contributions from an additional collaborating body will form part of the collaboration agreement. In respect of CAST Studentships, the sharing of project outputs with the additional collaborating body is contingent upon receiving their cash contribution.
- 1.14 All parties involved in the project, including the University should agree how to support the project and associated student with any additional contributions.

Placement with the Collaborative Body

- 1.15 When accepting students, the collaborative body commits to offering at least three months' worth of placement to the students associated with their projects. Students must be offered a placement opportunity, which, except for CAST Studentships, they may choose to decline.
- 1.16 Placements are expected to occur on the premises of the collaborating body associated with their project.

- 1.17 If a placement with the collaborating body is not possible or appropriate, then an alternative experience should be sought, such as a virtual placement with the collaborating body, or a placement with an alternative collaborating body.
- 1.18 Where more than one collaborating body is involved, placements may be offered with whichever collaborating body is considered most appropriate.
- 1.19 Students can spend longer periods on placements, subject to the university's minimum attendance requirements for students to remain registered for the higher degree, as well as any conditions associated with the doctoral qualification.
- 1.20 The placement should be tailored to the project and be appropriate for all parties. It does not necessarily need to be delivered in one full-time block and may be split into as many periods as are deemed appropriate and optimal for the project and dissemination of knowledge.
- 1.21 Placements may be at collaborating body premises outside the UK providing: a risk assessment is completed; the student's expenses are covered; government travel guidelines are followed, and the student remains in contact with their host university.

Responsibility of the Collaboration Project Supervisor and Academic Supervisor

- 1.22 Contact should be maintained between the collaboration project supervisor/s, the academic supervisor/s, and the student throughout the duration of the Studentship.

APPENDIX B: TAUGHT RESEARCH MASTERS (MRES) STUDENTSHIPS AT ULSTER UNIVERSITY

- 1.0 A number of awards may be available for Master of Research Courses (MRes) at Ulster University which provide structured and progressive research training, and which meet the following criteria:
- i. The research project must form a minimum of one third of the course.
 - ii. The taught material must contain modules on research techniques, advanced knowledge, advanced skills and transferable skills.
 - iii. The course should equally well provide training for a course, or for further research training.
- 1.1 Holders of TAUGHT STUDENTSHIPS for MRes study will subsequently be eligible to apply for a RESEARCH STUDENTSHIP and, if successful, to hold such a Studentship for the full three years.

Type of Course

- 1.2 The **University Authority** will decide which courses will be allocated Studentships in a particular year and a list of these specified courses is available from the relevant **University Authority**.

Duration of a Taught MRES Studentship

- 1.3 Taught MRes Studentships are only available full time. The duration of the Taught MRes Studentship, exclusive of initial or terminal leave, must be more than six months. The total period, including holidays, will not normally be more than 12 months.
- 1.4 A Taught MRes Studentship will not be available to applicants who do not satisfy the academic regulations of the University in relation to previous postgraduate study.

Withdrawal from a Taught MRES Studentship

- 1.5 Students who withdraw from study for reasons acceptable to the **University Authority** will be eligible to re-apply in the next available competition for TAUGHT MRES STUDENTSHIPS, but there is no guarantee they will be successful in the competition.

Support of Taught MRES Courses

- 1.6 The **University Authority** will ensure that the necessary facilities are available for master's courses and associated projects. Repayment of expenses for training or attendance at short courses will not be considered by the Department. TAUGHT MRES STUDENTSHIPS do not include any provision for costs for attending conferences, fieldwork, travel, etc.

APPENDIX C: LEAVE ENTITLEMENT

1.0 Family Leave

1.1 **Maternity Leave** DfE funded students are entitled to 52 weeks of maternity equivalent 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 and no later than the birth of the child. Students are eligible for Maternity Leave if:

- (1) the maternity leave is planned to commence (or does commence) before the end of the Student's funded period; and
- (2) they are the birth parent of the child.

1.2 A Stipend will be paid at the full rate for the first 26 weeks of Maternity Leave, pro-rated as necessary for part time students. The following 13 weeks will be paid at a level commensurate with Statutory Maternity Pay for the next 13 weeks of Maternity Leave. The final 13 weeks will not be paid. The Studentship may be extended to account for periods taken as Maternity Leave.

1.3 Students may return from Maternity Leave for single days to participate in activities related to their research project during their leave, akin to Keeping in Touch (KiT) days. A stipend may be drawn from the grant at an appropriate rate for that day. This should be agreed between the Student and the University Authority in advance.

1.4 **Partner's or Paternity Leave** (leave for partners following the birth of a child). A stipend will be paid for two weeks of leave for a DfE funded Student who is the partner of a mother or birth parent following the birth of their child. A Student is eligible for this leave if the following conditions are met:

- (1) the leave is planned to commence (or does commence) before the end of the Student's funded period and the leave commences within 52 weeks of the birth of a child AND
- (2) the Student is either
 - (i) the father or non-birth parent of the child or
 - (ii) partner of the child's birth parent AND
 - (iii) the Student must also have or expect to have the main responsibility (apart from any responsibility of the mother/birth parent) for the upbringing of the child.

- 1.5 For these purposes, “partner” means a person who lives with the birth parent and the child in an enduring family relationship but is not the birth parent’s parent, grandparent, sibling, child, aunt or uncle. A partner may be married to or be a civil partner of the birth parent, but this is not a requirement.
- 1.6 **Adoption Leave.** A Student is eligible for Adoption Leave if the Student has been newly matched with a child through an adoption agency, or if the Student has used a surrogate during their Studentship. Leave during the Studentship for a main adopter of a child in NI begins when the child’s placement starts, or an agreed period of time before the child’s placement starts to support preparation. The support available for the main adopter is commensurate to Maternity Leave.
- 1.7 The support available for a Student who is the partner (as defined in 1.5) of the main adopter of the child or is the co-adopter, is commensurate with Paternity Leave. The Studentship may be extended to account for the period of Adoption Leave. A Stipend may also be paid for Students attending adoption appointments after being matched with a child. The Studentship should not be extended for these appointments.
- 1.8 **Neonatal Care Leave.** A Student is eligible for Neonatal Care Leave if:
- (1) the birth of the child is within the funded period of the Studentship or a planned period of Maternity Leave and the child is receiving neonatal care in a hospital and
 - (2) they are either
 - (i) the mother/birth parent of the child or
 - (ii) a father/non birth parent or partner of the mother/birth parent as defined in para 1.5 above. One week of Neonatal Care Leave should be provided for each week or part-week in which the child is in neonatal care, up to a maximum of 12 weeks. This is additional to Maternity or Paternity Leave and a stipend will be paid at the usual rate. The Studentship may be extended to account for periods taken as Neonatal Leave.
- 1.9 **Parental leave (no stipend).** A Student may take leave in order to provide care to a child for whom they are a parent/carer of up to 1 month each year. No Stipend may be drawn during this period, but the end date of the Studentship will be modified accordingly. Alternatively, the Studentship can be suspended.
- 1.10 **Death during a period of maternity.** A partner is eligible for leave on the same basis as the mother or main adopter if the mother or main adopter dies during or shortly before the period of maternity or adoption leave. For pregnancy loss or the loss of a child, see Additional Leave.

2.0 Medical Leave

- 2.1 Medical Leave should be used for any circumstances by which a Student is deemed unfit to study. It may also be used to provide paid leave to attend medical appointments where flexible study is not possible. Examples of leave that can be supported under Medical Leave are:
- Sick leave (including both physical and mental health)
 - Pregnancy-related illness
 - Antenatal appointments
 - Fertility treatment – a Student experiencing fertility issues and has been medically advised that they require leave, including (but not limited to) undergoing fertility treatment
 - Disability-related illness (including chronic illness)
 - Disability-related appointments (including for chronic illness) e.g. diagnosis, therapy or treatment
 - Gender reassignment – a Student undertaking gender reassignment and has been medically advised that they require leave.
- 2.2 A stipend may be drawn for Medical Leave for up to 28 weeks in a rolling 12-month period. The total cumulative amount of medical leave must not exceed 39 weeks across the whole Studentship (based on a three-year Studentship).
- 2.3 Where a student is unfit to study, this may be certified or equivalent from a medical professional or a record that the University has determined that the Student is unfit to study.
- 2.4 Disabled Students with a known need for a high number of medical appointments may wish for this to be considered outside of Medical Leave, through the University's policy for reasonable adjustments in compliance with the Special Education Needs and Disability (NI) Order 2005 (SENDO).
- 2.5 A Studentship may be extended where the total amount of medical leave (excluding minor illnesses) and Additional Leave are over one week and must be extended when the total amount of medical leave (excluding minor illnesses) and Additional Leave exceeds one month (subject to paras 9.10 to 9.12 in Section 9). For further information on extensions see section 9.
- 2.6 For International students whose right to remain in the UK is by virtue of a Student Visa (or previously a Tier 4 Visa), the obligation to permit, for example, 12 months leave for maternity, to permit sickness leave and payment is subject to any restrictions on remaining in the UK, and payment of funding imposed by virtue of the legislation and guidance relating to the granting of the Student Visa (or Tier 4 visa). The University is likely to be required by UK Visas and Immigration to stop sponsorship of a Student visa if the student is taking an absence for more than 60 days. Visa holders are advised to take advice on possible implications for their visa if they require an extended period of absence.

3.0 Additional Leave

3.1 Additional leave may be provided to cover specific instances where a Student may be required to be absent from study that are not covered by other types of leave. These include:

- Special leave (including bereavement and pregnancy loss)
- Baby loss (including stillbirth and neonatal death)
- Carer's leave
- Additional disability leave associated with delayed adjustments
- Health and safety
- Public duties

3.2 **Special Leave (including bereavement and pregnancy loss).** This covers paid leave on compassionate grounds (compassionate leave) in addition to emergency situations such as serious illness or injury involving a Student's dependant or to deal with any domestic emergency or emergency situation at home, such as flooding. This list is not exhaustive and other events that create significant disruption that cannot be accommodated through flexible working such as non-medical appointments (e.g. legal) may be considered.

3.3 Typically, a stipend will be paid for up to 5 days leave pro rata. At the Universities' discretion, the student may be eligible for a stipend up to 10 days' paid leave pro rata. In the following circumstances, 10 days' paid leave pro rata will be allowed:

- (1) in the event of the death of a parent, close relative or a child
- (2) in the event that a pregnancy is lost before 24 weeks whether the student:
 - (i) experiences this loss directly or
 - (ii) is the partner, as defined in para 1.5, of someone who experiences the loss; or
 - (iii) loses a baby via surrogacy.

3.4 Absences beyond the allowances detailed at 3.3 (1) and (2) above may be taken as Medical Leave (see section 2 above) where they meet the conditions. The Studentship may be extended to account for periods taken as Special Leave.

3.5 **Baby loss (including stillbirth and neonatal death).** A Student is entitled to this leave, in addition to Special Leave, if the Student is

- (1) the mother/birth parent or
- (2) the father/non-birth parent/partner of the birth mother (as defined in section 1.5) and

- (3) the baby is stillborn or born at any stage of pregnancy in or beyond week 24 of the pregnancy but dies within the first 52 weeks of being born.
- 3.6 This is irrespective of whether the child was stillborn, dies within the first 28 days (neonatal death) or dies at any other time in the first 52 weeks. The student will be provided the same amount of Family Leave as they would have been provided had the child survived. If the Student is already on Family Leave, this will continue unless the student expressly requests to return to study early.
- 3.7 **Carer's leave** A stipend of up to 5 days per year pro rata may be paid to a student who needs to give or arrange care for a dependant with a long-term care need. This is defined as a dependant with a disability as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, care need related to old age, or an illness or injury likely to need care for more than 3 months. The Studentship will be extended to account for periods taken as carer's leave.
- 3.8 **Additional disability leave associated with delayed adjustments.** A student's stipend will be paid while they are unable to study as the result of a delay in putting in place reasonable adjustments. An extension to the Studentship may be provided for disruption over 5 days. Students must not study while on this leave type. It should not be used merely to extend the period available to study nor should it replace or enhance the provision available through Medical Leave.
- 3.9 **Health and Safety.** Where a health and safety concern means that a student is temporarily unable to continue with their studies and the University has made all other reasonable efforts to mitigate the issue, the student is eligible for a stipend while they are unable to study. The Studentship may be extended to account for periods taken as leave related to Health & Safety over 5 days.
- 3.10 **Public Duties.** Paid leave may be provided for jury service and army reservist training. An extension may also be provided.

APPENDIX D: ACKNOWLEDGEMENT, DISSEMINATION AND EXPLOITATION OF RESULTS

- 1.1 The Department's support must be acknowledged in any publication dealing with the work carried out during the tenure of the Studentship.
- 1.2 Each University, and all engaged in research supported by a Studentship, should ensure that any intellectual property arising during the course of the Studentship is considered for exploitation. The student must therefore comply with the policies and procedures laid down by the University for the dissemination and exploitation of results.
- 1.3 Each University has issued guidance to academic staff on many aspects of identifying, protecting and exploiting inventions. Further information is available from the Commercial Development and Intellectual Property (IP) functions at the University who are available to provide a brief introduction to intellectual property; this can be arranged individually or with a group of colleagues. Students should particularly bear in mind the following:

Protection of Possible Patent Action

- 1.4 A patent is an exclusive right to retain a time-limited monopoly on a technical invention in specified sovereign states. Potential patent rights will be prejudiced by publication or non-confidential disclosure of the subject matter prior to filing a patent application.
- 1.5 Publication is interpreted very broadly and covers anything made available publicly in writing, orally, by use, or in any other way before protection is sought. Students should avoid disclosing novel learnings from their work in the public domain without prior consultation with the relevant technology transfer authority in the University.
- 1.6 It is imperative that the Student keeps Laboratory Notebooks, especially if the project could lead to a patentable invention. Specifically, the Laboratory Notebook should contain the dates and location of when novel ideas were conceived, who was present and who contributed to their conception; what research actions were undertaken, where the research actions were undertaken who was involved/ contributed/ consulted; what data was captured and where was this data captured.
- 1.7 Details of the contributions of other researchers, including the Supervisor should also be recorded at every stage of the project as well as the date and location of every disclosure, confidential and non-confidential. Confidential disclosures may not affect the patentability of inventions, but these must be done under the provision of a Non-Disclosure Agreement between the university and the third party, and the Commercial Development and IP function must be consulted prior to any disclosure.
- 1.8 The Commercial Development and IP function can provide guidance as required.

Protection of Non-Patentable Material

- 1.9 Intellectual Property (IP) refers generally to commercial value derived from the creations of mind. Therein there is often commercial value derived from research which cannot be patented; these include know-how, computer software or other results which can be of commercial value. These types of IP are automatically protected via copyright or design rights, or via non-disclosure and retention. It is important to discuss these options with your Commercial Development and IP function.

Exploitation Costs and Resources

- 1.10 Studentship holders must assign their IP Rights to the University at the commencement of their Studentship and receive benefits in accordance with the University's policies.
- 1.11 The Department for the Economy excludes all liability, to the fullest extent permissible by law, which may arise in relation to the patented and non-patentable IP that arises out the Studentship.

APPENDIX E: USE OF ANIMALS IN RESEARCH

- 1.1 Students must comply with the provisions of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 and ensure that all necessary licences are in place before any work requiring approval takes place.
- 1.2 The expectations of researchers are set out in [Responsibility in the use of animals in bioscience research | NC3Rs](#) and [UKRI policy on research and innovation involving animals – UKRI](#). Further information is provided on the University Authority's websites at:

[Animals in Research at Queens University](#)

[Animals in Research Ulster University](#)
- 1.3 Wherever possible, researchers must adopt procedures and techniques that avoid the use of animals. Where this is not possible, the research should be designed so that;
 - The least sentient species with the appropriate physiology is used.
 - The number of animals used is the minimum sufficient to provide adequate statistical power to provide a robust and reliable answer to the questions posed.
 - The severity of procedures performed on animals is kept to a minimum. Appropriate anaesthesia, analgesia and humane endpoints should be used to minimise any pain and suffering.