

Handbook for Postgraduate Researchers

Academic Year 2023-24



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Welcome from the Dean of Aston Graduate School



Welcome to your research programme at Aston University and to Aston Graduate School.

The Graduate School's main objective is to provide a supportive environment for all postgraduate researchers across the University, whatever their mode of study and wherever they are located, with a view to widening and enriching their experience during their research programme.

The PGR Administration Team within the Graduate School is the first point of contact on non-academic matters for all postgraduate researchers and their supervisors. The Graduate School is also responsible for maintaining the quality of research degree programmes and the development of training in core research and transferable skills.

Your College is the main centre for the delivery of subject-specific research training and development. Complementing this, the Graduate School provides a focus for the sharing of ideas and best practice between the Colleges. The Graduate School supports and promotes cross-institutional interdisciplinary work and studies and, together with the researcher-led [Aston Postgraduate Research Society](#) (APRS), promotes both academic and social events. These will provide many research students with the opportunity to interact with other postgraduate researchers across the academic disciplines.

The journey from enrolment to graduation can be challenging at times, but it should also be enjoyable. Both the Graduate School team and your Colleges are here to give you full support and advice whenever you need it. Information you will need during your study is contained in this

Handbook and can be found on the **Graduate School Website** or the **Aston Graduate School: Postgraduate Research Students – Researcher Development** course on Blackboard.

During your studies, you will be supported by a Researcher Development Team, with experts in different areas (for example, Library Services, Career Development, Research & Knowledge Exchange) who collectively provide a range of training and development opportunities for research students and research staff. Engagement in these opportunities provides an excellent forum for the exchange of ideas and information across discipline boundaries and is an important part of your research development. So please take advantage of all the opportunities available to you and enjoy a fulfilling and rewarding journey to the completion and award of your research degree.

The Graduate School is located on the sixth floor of the Main Building. In addition to the Graduate School Office (MB652a), there is the Postgraduate Researcher Common Room (MB652c), where you can meet, relax and socialise.

Professor Phil Mizen

Key Dates 2023/24 and Contact for General Queries

As a postgraduate researcher, term dates are not applicable as you will be expected to work across the whole year, with vacation dates to be agreed with your supervisor, but the following term and University closure dates are highlighted for information.

University Term dates 2023/24	
Term 1	25 September – 16 December 2023
Term 2	8 January – 28 March 2024
Term 3	22 April – 8 June 2024

University closure days 2023/24	
Christmas and New year	Monday 25 December 2023 Tuesday 26 December 2023 Wednesday 27 December 2023 Thursday 28 December 2023 Friday 29 December 2023 Monday 1 January 2024
Easter Vacation and Customary Aston Closure Day	Friday 29 March 2024 Monday 1 April 2024 Tuesday 2 April 2024
Other Bank Holidays and Customary Aston Closure Days	Monday 6 May 2024 Monday 27 May 2024 Monday 26 August 2024 Tuesday 27 August 2024

Key contact for general queries

PGR Progression team within the Graduate School
pgr_general@aston.ac.uk

A full list of Graduate School and College staff and their roles can be found in [section 1.1](#) of the Handbook

1. Postgraduate Research (PGR) Community at Aston

Aston has a diverse and vibrant community of postgraduate researchers engaging in a wide range of research. As well as your supervisory team, your College, the Graduate School and peer groups will help you navigate your way through your research programme.

1.1 Aston Graduate School

Aston Graduate School is responsible for researcher development and the administration of research degree programmes as well as supporting postgraduate researchers and supervisors.

The Graduate School Office is located on the 6th floor of the Main Building, MB652a. Current office hours for face-to-face queries are: Mon-Fri 10am – 4pm, but if you need to speak to a specific member of the team please book an appointment in advance as not all team members are on campus every day. Team members can also be contacted by email, phone or Teams Mon-Fri 9am-5pm.

Current team members and contact details

Team members	Role	Contact details
Caroline Brocklebank and Catherine Jarrett - PGR Progression Officers	Provide advice and guidance to current PGRs and manage the processes for progression, annual reviews, changes to study/supervision, thesis submission and vivas.	pgr_general@aston.ac.uk
Abdul Mumin – Programme Support Officer	Supports Graduate School training and development, taught module administration and the Research Student Development Fund. Also responsible for overseeing admissions process for visiting PGR students.	pgr_general@aston.ac.uk OR, for Graduate School training related queries, ags_development@aston.ac.uk
Steve Baker and Jennie Sutherland Clothier – PGR Admissions Officers	Manage processes for recruitment and admission of PGRs including funding opportunities and studentships.	pgr_admissions@aston.ac.uk
Jo Thorpe – DBA Admissions and Programme Support Officer	Manages processes for recruitment and admission on the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) programme and is also a point of contact for current DBA researchers.	pgr_general@aston.ac.uk Work pattern: Monday - Wednesday
Farat Ara - PGR Administration Manager	Has overall responsibility for PGR administration and manages the PGR administration team.	f.ara@aston.ac.uk
Dr Eren Bilgen – Researcher Development Advisor	Leads researcher development activities for PGRs.	f.erenbilgen@aston.ac.uk OR, for general training and development related queries, ags_development@aston.ac.uk
Dr Eleni Tseligka – Professional Development Advisor for Research	Programme Leader for Early Career Researcher (ECR) training.	e.tseligka@aston.ac.uk
Yvonne Henderson – Graduate School Senior Administrator	Has overall responsibility for governance, regulation and quality assurance matters.	y.henderson@aston.ac.uk

1.2 Colleges and Research Groups/Institutes

You will be a member of the College which your lead supervisor is based in. The three Colleges at Aston are:

[Business and Social Sciences \(BSS\)](#)

[Engineering and Physical Sciences \(EPS\)](#)

[Health and Life Sciences \(HLS\)](#)

These are further organized by schools, departments, research groups, research institute and research centres and you will be affiliated with the research unit your lead supervisor is in and encouraged to participate in research events and seminars both within your research area and beyond for cross-disciplinary research. You can find out more about your College structure and research departments or groups by following the College links above.

More information will be given at your College induction about how you can participate in research activities of your College.

Current schools/departments/research institutes/centres and Directors/Heads:

Business and Social Sciences (BSS)

Aston Business School (ABS)

Department	Departmental Research Director
Accounting (ACC)	Dr Ilias Basioudis
Economics, Finance and Entrepreneurship (EFE)	Dr Sajid Chaudhry
Marketing and Strategy (MKT)	Dr Andrew Farrell
Operations and Information Management (OIM)	Dr Panos Petridis and Dr Victoria Uren
Work and Organisation (WON)	TBC

Aston Law School (ALS)

Department	Research Director
Aston Law School (Law)	Professor Simon Lee

Social Sciences & Humanities (SSH)

Department	Departmental Research Director
English, Languages and Applied Linguistics	Professor Gertrud Reershemius
Politics, History and International Relations	Dr Jelena Obradovic-Wochnik, Dr Carolyn Rowe and Professor Stefan Manz
Sociology and Policy	Dr Tom Mills

Engineering & Physical Sciences (EPS)

Department/Institute	Head of Department/ Institute/ School
Aston Institute of Photonic Technologies (AIPT)	Professor Sergei Turitsyn
Energy and Bioproducts Research Institute (EBRI)	Professor Patricia Thornley
Aston Digital Future Institute (ADFI)	Professor Abdul Sadka
School of Computer Science and Digital Technologies	Professor Damien Foster
Applied Mathematics and Data Science (AMDS)	Professor Helen Higson
Applied Artificial Intelligence and Robotics (AAIR)	Professor Damien Foster (interim HoD)
Software Engineering and Cybersecurity (SEC)	Professor Jo Lumsden
Electronics and Computer Engineering (ECE)	Dr Paul Harper
School of Engineering and Technology	Dr Laura Leslie
Aston Professional Engineering Centre (APEC)	Dr Ahmad Baroutaji (Interim Head of Department)
Aston Foundation Centre	Dr Sukhvinder Phull (Interim HoD)
Mechanical & Biomechanical Design (MBDE)	Dr Ricardo Jose Sodre
School of Infrastructure and Sustainable Engineering	Professor Paul Topham
Civil Engineering (CE)	Professor Mujib Rahman
Engineering Systems & Supply Chain Management (ESSCM)	Dr Lucy Rackliff
Chemical Engineering and Applied Chemistry (CEAC)	Dr Jiawei Wang

Health & Life Sciences (HLS)

Schools	Head of School (HoS)
School of Optometry	Professor James Wolffsohn
School of Psychology	Professor Richard Tunney
Pharmacy School	Dr Joe Bush
School of Biosciences	Professor Andrew Devitt
Aston Medical School	Professor Eamonn Maher
Research Groups	Director of Research (DoR)
Applied Health Research Group (AHRG)	Professor Rachel Shaw
Biosciences Research Group (BRG)	Professor Corinne Spickett
Cognition and Neuroscience Research Group (CNRG)	Dr Laura Shapiro
Optometry and Vision Science Research Group (OVSRG)	Professor Nicola Logan
Pharmaceutical and Clinical Pharmacy Research group (PCPRG)	Professor Ian Maidment
Pharmacology and Translational Neuroscience Research Group (PTNRG)	Professor David Poyner
Translational Medicine Research Group (TMRG)	Dr Boris Kysela
Research Institute	Director
Aston Institute of Health and Neurodevelopment (IHN)	Professor Jackie Blissett/ Professor Gavin Woodhall
Research Centre	Director
Aston Research Centre for Health in Ageing (ARCHA)	Professor Andrew Schofield
Aston Centre for Membrane Proteins and Lipids Research (AMPL)	Professor Roslyn Bill
Ophthalmic Technology and Devices Research Centre (OTD)	James Wolffsohn/ Nicola Logan

1.3 Key PGR Contacts within Colleges

Your Supervisor and Associate Supervisor(s) will be your key points of contact for your research project and can also help signpost other sources of support. However, there are also a number of other key staff within your College who have a PGR support role.

Deputy/Associate Deans for Research – have strategic responsibility for research degree provision, research environment and funding within their College. They are not normally involved in day-to-day academic or operational processes but do consider appointment of examiners, Waivers of Regulations and appeals.

Directors of Research Degree Programmes – have a wide-ranging remit for research degree programmes, postgraduate researchers and supervisors within their College. They are responsible for overseeing progression, subject specific training provision, supervision issues, considering requests for extensions and leaves of absence. They also oversee mechanisms for postgraduate researcher feedback and representation. They are likely to be your main College contact for issues that cannot be resolved at supervisor level or with the help of the PGR Tutor.

In BSS the Director of Research Degree Programmes is supported by a DBA Programme Director and PhD Programme Director. Researchers should reach out to the relevant Programme Director for issues that cannot be resolved at supervisor level or with the help of the PGR Tutor. More information about the roles of the Programme Directors will be given out at the College induction event for your programme.

PGR Tutors – provide pastoral support and can signpost other sources of advice and support, for example concerning wellbeing. They are a first point of contact for any concerns to do with supervision.

College Research Managers/Support Staff – can provide support in relation to specific operational or non-academic issues that are managed at local level – for example, the allocation of desk space or IT equipment (where applicable) or travel bookings and risk assessments. Please remember your main point of contact for all other non-academic matters is the PGR Progression team – pgr_general@aston.ac.uk. If in doubt, please always contact the PGR Progression team in the first instance.

Current College contacts for PGR matters

College	Deputy/Associate Dean Research	Director of Research Degree Programmes/ Programme Directors	PGR Tutor	Research Support Staff
BSS	TBC	<p>Dr Jonathan Crawshaw j.r.crawshaw2@aston.ac.uk</p> <p>PhD Programme Director: Dr Vahid Jafari-Sadeghi v.jafari-sadeghi@aston.ac.uk</p> <p>DBA Programme Director: Dr Geoff Parkes g.s.parkes@aston.ac.uk</p>	<p>Dr Joyce Lim, SSH j.lim@aston.ac.uk</p> <p>Dr Rhonson Salim r.salim@aston.ac.uk</p>	Dan Thomson, Research Manager d.thomson1@aston.ac.uk
EPS	Professor Tony Dodd t.dodd@aston.ac.uk	TBC	Dr Zhentao Wu z.wu7@aston.ac.uk	Dr Emma Estevez, Research Support Team Leader m.estevezgarcia@aston.ac.uk
HLS	Professor Claire Farrow c.farrow@aston.ac.uk	Dr Michael Larkin m.larkin@aston.ac.uk	Professor Tim Meese t.s.meese@aston.ac.uk	Gill Pilfold, Senior Research Administrator g.m.pilfold@aston.ac.uk

1.4 PGR Workspaces

Campus-based postgraduate researchers normally have access to shared or dedicated desk-space within their Colleges. Your College induction will provide more information about what facilities you can access and how. Please check with your Supervisor(s) in the first instance what facilities may be available and who to contact in order to arrange access. You can also contact the Research Support staff for your College listed above.

1.5 Aston Postgraduate Research Society (APRS)

The [Aston Postgraduate Research Society \(APRS\)](#) is the University-wide research student society, affiliated with the Students' Union. It plays a key role in PGR community building, encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration, enhancing the social and academic experiences of postgraduate researchers and representing their concerns to the Graduate School. It is run by postgraduate research representatives from each College. More information, including the names and contact details of representatives, can be found [here](#)

As a new postgraduate researcher, you will be automatically invited to join APRS when you enrol. The APRS Committee organises a range of social and interdisciplinary events which will be communicated to you via email, but you can also keep up-to-date with the latest APRS news by following the social media networks:

Instagram: [@APRS_Official](#)

Twitter: [@APRS_Official](#)

Aston University Website: <https://www.astonsu.com/society/aprs/>

1.6 Student Representation and Feedback

The University is committed to listening to the views of all its students and researchers and there are a number of ways you can make your views heard:

Staff Student Committee for Postgraduate Researchers

Each College has at least one Staff Student Committee for postgraduate researchers which will meet at least twice a year. You will be invited to attend the meetings or to raise concerns via a representative. More details will be provided in the College induction and you can also reach out to the Research Support staff listed above for details of meetings and/or students members.

PGR Representatives on other Committees

Postgraduate researchers have a representative on each of the Committees listed below and you can forward any concerns to the relevant representative. You can also volunteer to be a representative yourself. Nominations are normally invited in the Autumn by the Students Union and there may be an election if there is more than one candidate for a position:

College Research Committee
Graduate School Management Committee
University Research Committee

If you are interested in finding out more about what a Student Representative does, you can check the [Students Union website](#) which also includes contact details for the student representatives.

The Students' Union also provides training for committee representatives and you are advised to attend in order to fully understand the role and the position of the committee in the overall structure of the University.

Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)

The [Postgraduate Research Experience Survey](#) (PRES) provides an opportunity for all postgraduate researchers to provide feedback on their experience which in turn allows institutions to use the data to enhance provision. At Aston, the Survey runs every two years and you will be contacted when the next one opens and encouraged to respond.

Other Opportunities to Raise Concerns or Give Feedback

You can also raise any concerns or provide feedback via the [Aston Postgraduate Research Society](#) committee representatives. For taught modules, you will have the opportunity to provide formal feedback at the end of the module and can also raise concerns with the module leader and/or Programme Director. Any issue related to supervision can be discussed with the PGR Tutor and/or Director of Research Degree Programmes. There is also an opportunity to provide feedback, in confidence, on supervision and related issues as part of the annual progress review – see [section 4.4](#).

1.7 PGR Wellbeing

Your wellbeing is extremely important and critical to your success. There are formal and informal support mechanisms and resources to help with wellbeing. The formal support provision is delivered by [Student Welfare Services](#) and includes a dedicated Mental Health and Wellbeing service, and a Counselling service providing free counselling, psychiatric support and workshops to all current students and postgraduate researchers.

If you wish to seek support for yourself or are concerned about the welfare of another researcher or student, you can let the team know via the [Student Welfare Support Request Form](#), which you can also find on aston.ac.uk/studentwelfare (further updates coming soon).

Where possible, contact with the above services should be via the Support Request Form, to ensure the correct information is available for the referrer and the service(s). You can also contact the team on the **new email**: studentwelfare@aston.ac.uk or call them on 0121 204 5100. The inbox and phone line are monitored between 09:00 hrs and 17:00 hrs on weekdays only.

These services are **not** emergency services, so if you believe someone to be at significant risk of immediate harm, contact **999** and/or Campus Safety while on campus (0121 359 2922 or use the [Safezone app](#)).

If you are not sure where to find the support you need, you can also reach out to your PGR Tutor (see [section 1.3](#)) with any welfare concerns and they can signpost the appropriate support.

There are regular events and activities delivered by the University and [Students' Union](#) as well as [Aston Postgraduate Research Society](#) to support student wellbeing.

1.8 Disability and Academic Support

The University has a dedicated team providing support and reasonable adjustments to students and postgraduate researchers who have a disability or a diagnosed long-term health condition, as well as specialist academic support to assess and support learners with specific learning differences. You can find further information on the [Student Welfare](#) pages.

1.9 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

We believe that the diversity of our staff and student community is fundamental to creative thinking, innovation and intellectual challenge, and we are committed to creating an environment where diversity is celebrated and everyone is treated fairly, regardless of their circumstances.

We have ambitious diversity goals and an excellent record of achievement (such as meeting widening participation targets and earning Athena SWAN awards). Please see our [HR pages](#) and [Inclusive Aston](#) for more details.

If you have any questions about diversity and inclusion at the University please contact the Inclusive Aston team at diversity@aston.ac.uk.

1.10 Report + Support

Aston University wants all members of our University community to feel safe. Harassment of any kind is completely unacceptable, and we seek to make our community an environment where prejudice and socially unacceptable behaviours are never tolerated. Using the online webpage (<https://reportandsupport.aston.ac.uk/>) you can report incidents of harassment or other misconduct that you would like us to know about. If you provide your contact details a member of staff will make contact to discuss the support available to you and what you would like to happen next.

We use the data we collect from this system to better understand the issues impacting our University community, to monitor trends and inform our future actions.

You have the option of reporting your concerns anonymously or providing your contact details so that the University can contact you about your concern.

2. Getting Started

This section is a summary of the key information you need to get started on your programme and also a reference point should you need guidance re any of these issues at a later point.

2.1 Enrolment

Before starting your programme, you will need to enrol with the University. The first stage is on-line enrolment, during which you will be assigned a student number, username and password, followed in most cases by face-to-face enrolment at Aston at which you will be required to present your original identification and qualifications documents; distance learners will be advised of alternative arrangements by the PGR Admissions Team. Online pre-enrolment is through My Aston Portal or MAP – [see section 2.5](#).

2.2 Re-enrolment

All postgraduate researchers are expected to re-enrol annually in September, irrespective of their research start date. The purpose of re-enrolment is to confirm that you are enrolled in the current academic year, rather than to confirm that you have completed (a further) 12 months of your research programme. The re-enrolment process, therefore, indicates the number of academic years (rather than calendar or research years) that you have been enrolled at the University. For example, anyone with a research start date of January will re-enrol into their second academic year in September when they are nine months into their research degree programme.

Re-enrolment is via MAP and you will be emailed when the MAP re-enrolment task is available for you to complete, usually in the first half of September. As part of the re-enrolment process, you will be asked to confirm that you accept the University's Regulations for the current academic year. A summary of the key changes to the research degree Regulations is posted on the [Graduate School website](#) each year.

2.3 University ID Card (uniCARD)

You will be issued with an individual University ID card (uniCARD). This Card has an **ID** number, which is **registered to you**. The system logs the use of this Card. We would encourage you to read the Rules and Regulations for the uniCARD which can be found on the Solve Portal – [uniCARD Rules and Regulations](#). Breach of any of these rules or regulations, in particular the loan of your Card to another person, will be subject to disciplinary action. All *bona fide* members of staff, students and registered visitors will be issued with a Card for their own use.

Cards are needed for access to buildings and must be worn at all times on campus. Cardholders are available from the Digital Services Helpdesk. Anyone not wearing their Card may be asked to leave the building.

If you lose your uniCARD or it is stolen, then you must report the loss as soon as possible to the Digital Services Helpdesk via the Solve portal - [Solve Portal - Home Page](#). Alternatively, this can be reported directly at the Digital Services Helpdesk

located on the ground floor of Main Building East, or via telephone 0121 204 3445; email digital_helpdesk@aston.ac.uk .

If you lose your Card there is a replacement charge of £10. However, if the Card has been stolen it will be replaced free of charge on receipt of a police crime report number.

Details about the uniCARD and information regarding replacements is available on the Solve Portal - <https://solve.aston.ac.uk/>; just type uniCARD into the search bar.

2.4 Email Addresses

All students are issued an email address in the format of their student number followed by @aston.ac.uk , eg 12345678@aston.ac.uk. Postgraduate researchers have the option to change the email address that is displayed. The alternative alias is first initial followed by first 4 letters of the surname followed by the year of entry in two digit format. For example, John Smith enrolling in 23/24 would have the alias jsmit23@aston.ac.uk.

To use the alternative alias, please log into **webmail** and select the '**Settings**' cog. Then click on '**View all outlook settings**'. Select '**Email**' from left hand menu and then '**Compose and Reply**' from the sub-menu. Scroll down the options to section entitled '**Addresses to send from**' and select your preferred email alias.

2.5 Where to Find Key Information and Guidance

My Aston Portal (MAP)

MAP is Aston University's staff and student portal. You will receive login credentials via email at the start of the programme. More information and troubleshooting help can be found in the [MAP knowledge items](#) on the [Solve portal](#).

Your research programme details, including your research start date, details of your supervisor(s), and your projected thesis submission date, will be displayed on your MAP Home Page. If you believe any of these details are incorrect, you should contact the [PGR Progression Team](#). Your MAP Home Page will also display or contain links to the following:

- Personal Details, such as contact address, phone number, emergency contact (you are responsible for keeping these up-to-date via MAP and we will assume that you do so);
- Electronic Resources, including links to the University Library and to the virtual learning environment, Blackboard, which can also be found at <https://vle.aston.ac.uk>. Blackboard contains an [Aston Graduate School: Postgraduate Research Students - Researcher Development](#) course;
- Student Finances, including a link to the online payments homepage and expense claim forms;
- Standard Letters available for you to request, including Confirmation of Student Status;
- Recorded Absences;
- Research Training and Development (see [section 6.4](#));
- Regulations and Codes of Practice relevant to your degree programme;

- University Contacts, including links to the Graduate School and The Hub (Student Support Services).

Blackboard (Virtual Learning Environment)

Blackboard is the University's online virtual learning environment (VLE) and is used to provide resources and to access course information. You can access it at vle.aston.ac.uk and log in using your standard University username and password. You will need to access it for all course information relating to any taught modules you may be undertaking as well as for resources and guidance related to your research programme - [Aston Graduate School: Postgraduate Research Students - Researcher Development](#) course. This course contains researcher development resources as well as a range of information relating to your programme.

For help and advice on using Blackboard please see the guidance for [students](#) on the [Solve portal](#). If you can't find the answer in either of these resources, then please contact the TEL Team via telsupport@aston.ac.uk

Solve Portal

Solve is a self-service portal for students and staff. It has been developed to be a single portal to find guides and solutions, request something and report issues across multiple departments that include issues with IT support and software queries. You can access the [Solve portal](#) online and via the MyAston app.

Aston Graduate School Website

The [Aston Graduate School](#) website has essential information for current students and supervisors including Regulations and Policies and this handbook. The website is currently under re-development so if you are not able to access the information you need, please contact the [PGR Progression Team](#). You will need to login to access some of the pages.

2.6 How We Will Communicate with You

We will contact you by email and will use the Aston email address that will be allocated when you enrol (**not** personal email accounts). All formal University correspondence will be sent to your Aston email address and you should check your account regularly. It will be assumed that Aston emails are received and read; failing to retrieve an email from an Aston email address cannot be used to account for lack of communication except in the case of proven technical failure by Aston.

Guidance on setting up and using your email and calendar is available in the [knowledge item](#) on the [Solve portal](#). If you experience any problems with email, contact the Digital Services helpdesk via solve@aston.ac.uk or visit the Helpdesk in person in the Main Building East, Ground Floor.

PGR Induction Events

At the start of your programme, you will be invited to attend a PGR Induction led by the Graduate School as well as Induction events organised by your College and/or School/Department. These sessions provide an introduction to your programme and milestones as well as the general support and facilities available to you as a postgraduate researcher. There is also an opportunity to meet other new

postgraduate researchers as well as key staff. Attendance is mandatory and if you miss the scheduled induction event owing to a delayed start or some other reason, you will need to attend the next available session. Details of the sessions will be emailed to you at the start of the programme. If, for any reason, you have missed a Graduate School Induction event please email ags_development@aston.ac.uk so that you can be invited to the next session. For College level Induction events, please contact the research support contact for your College listed in [section 1.3](#).

2.7 Safety on Campus: Aston Safezone App

The University has launched a free safety and security app designed to optimise safety around campus for both students and staff. SafeZone enables students and staff to send location-based alerts via various electronic devices to Aston's Campus Safety Team by pressing a single button.

SafeZone can be used in instances where an emergency response is required, such as first-aid, support, or other emergency response, as well as general assistance. For more information and download links, please visit our [Campus safety webpage](#)

For non-emergency instances, but where there are safeguarding concerns regarding risk to children, young people, or adults, the University's [Safeguarding Concerns Policy](#) should be consulted.

3. Your Research Programme and Key Regulations and Policies

It is important to understand the key regulations and policies that govern your programme as well as what happens if there is a change in your circumstances and you need to take a short absence, suspend study, change the mode or location of study, or request an extension to a milestone deadline. This section also contains information about other important procedures such as requesting annual leave and travelling abroad.

3.1 Registration Periods

Most postgraduate researchers are enrolled in the first instance for an unspecified higher degree by research and thesis, with progression to a specified degree programme (e.g. PhD) being subject to satisfactory progress (Regulation 4.4 [General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis](#)).

Your effective research start date will be one of 1 October, 1 January, 1 April or 1 July, whichever is closest to your enrolment date (Regulation 4.1 of the [General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis](#)). Your research start date will be used to calculate dates for the submission of reports on your progress and the date for the submission of your thesis, and it is therefore important that you enrol as close to your research start date as possible.

The table below shows the standard period/duration of study for each research degree at Aston. The maximum time limit for submission includes the extension period that may be granted for postgraduate researchers who cannot submit within the standard period. It is not possible to submit before the earliest permitted submission date.

Degree	Mode of study	Standard period/duration of study	Maximum time limit for submission	Earliest permitted submission
PhD	Full-time	3 years*	4 years	2 years
	Part-time	6 years	7 years	4 years
MD	Full-time	2 years	3 years	2 years
	Part-time	4 years	5 years	4 years
Professional Doctorates**	Part-time	6 years	7 years	4 years
MPhil***	Full-time	2 years	3 years	2 years
	Part-time	4 years	5 years	4 years
MA/MSc by Research	Full-time	1 year	1 year 3 months	1 year
	Part-time	2 years	1 years 3 months	2 years

*Some full-time PhD programmes might have a standard duration of 4 years, owing to funder or other special requirements but the maximum time limit for submission remains unchanged

** For example, DBA, DOptom, Doctor of Hearing Therapy, EdD

***There is no direct entry to MPhil at Aston.

3.2 Regulations, Policies and Codes of Practice

It is extremely important that you read and familiarise yourself with the key University Regulations governing your programme. The key Regulations, Policies and Codes of Practice that you need to be aware of for research can be found [here](#). In particular, you should read the [General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis](#) and the [Code of Practice for Research Degrees](#) as well as the [General Regulations for the Presentation of Theses](#).

A comprehensive repository of Aston regulations and policies can be found on the [Aston Principles and Policies](#) pages and [A-Z of Academic Regulations, Quality Policies and Procedures](#). These include the academic appeals and complaints procedure as well as assessment regulations for taught modules and plagiarism detection software policy, to name a few.

3.3 Research Ethics and Integrity

All postgraduate researchers should take the time to reflect on the ethical and governance implications of their research at an early stage of their studies and are expected to adhere to the standards of work performance and conduct expected of all persons engaged in research at the University. Postgraduate researchers must complete mandatory research integrity training within their first year of study – details can be found [here](#).

For more information about research integrity, including whether you require ethics approval before your research can commence, please visit the [research integrity webpages](#). You can also find related resources on the [Aston Graduate School: Postgraduate Research Students - Researcher Development](#) course. In particular, you should note that all research involving human participants carried out by Aston staff or students must be reviewed by one of the University's ethics committees or by a recognised external committee such as an NHS Ethics Committee. Research not involving human participants directly but involving their data or tissue may also require ethical review, and you should consult the webpages for further guidance and who to contact for advice. Your supervisor is also your first point of contact for guidance relating to research ethics.

3.4 Research Misconduct

Research misconduct is a disciplinary matter and allegations of research conduct are taken extremely seriously by the University. The policy and procedures for dealing with research misconduct, including the definition of research misconduct and poor research practice can be found on the [research misconduct webpages](#). You should work with your supervisor to ensure that you adhere to the University's standards for research integrity. However, responsibility for avoiding misconduct ultimately rests with you as an individual researcher so you must familiarise yourself with the relevant policies and procedures.

3.5 Research Data

Aston defines research data in accordance with the UKRI Concordat on Open Research: “the evidence that underpins the answer to a research question”. Data may be quantitative or qualitative and may either be primary (generated first hand) or processed secondary data, where the rights for the original data may be held

elsewhere. Contemporary research data tends to exist digitally and takes many different forms including documents, spreadsheets, code, models, transcripts, images etc. However, historic and visual data can still exist physically as books, sketches, photographs, audiotapes and specimens.

Research data should be managed according to our Research Data Management Policy (<https://www.aston.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Aston-University-Research-Data-Management-Policy-July-2023.pdf>) and, if applicable, any specific requirements from your funder. Thoughtful planning for effective data management will enable you to get the most out of your research, and ensure you are compliant with funder or publisher requirements. Aston subscribes to DMPOnline, which allows you to create, review, and share data management plans that meet institutional and funder requirements. Sign up for an account, connect your institutional email, and select 'Create plan' to follow a recommended template to ensure compliance. Guidance on developing a useful and effective Data management plan is available from the Digital Curation Centre. Library Services' Open Research team can offer support related to data management or data publishing and archiving.

As you begin your role as a researcher at Aston your principal investigator/supervisor will set you up a folder in Box. The data you generate throughout the course of your research can be securely stored on Box, with the data being accessible online and/or via a desktop plug-in. If you are storing any sensitive data, these files should be password protected for an additional level of encryption. In most research settings it is common to record data (notes, observations and findings) in a lab/note book, care should be taken to ensure that these are always stored securely. When leaving the University, any physical notes you have made must be left with your supervisor. All research undertaken and data generated while at Aston must adhere to the guiding principles of the Research and Integrity Policy.

Aston supports the principle that research data should be “as open as possible, as closed as necessary” and the adherence to the FAIR Principles of data management. Data generated during a research project which may hold value to the wider research community can be deposited to Aston University’s institutional data repository Aston Data Explorer (<https://researchdata.aston.ac.uk/>) following guidance found in our Data Preservation and Open Research Data Policy (<https://www.aston.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2023-08/Aston-University-Research-Data-%20Preservation-and-Open-Research-Data-Policy-July-2023.pdf>). If there is research data which you would like to make open and accessible always speak to your supervisor in the first instance, and if applicable, check the requirements of your funder. Any research data which is stored and shared should be in a non-proprietary format (e.g. .CSV or .txt) to increase its reusability.

For further guidance on any aspect of research data management please contact researchdata@aston.ac.uk

3.6 Intellectual Property

Intellectual Property (IP) refers to ideas, information and knowledge that can be protected and commercialised (used to generate revenue). This includes: inventions (protectable with patents); literary, artistic works and images (protectable with copyright); symbols and names (protectable with trade marks); designs (protectable with design rights); as well as know-how and trade secrets (protectable with confidentiality). Other forms of IP include (amongst others) plant breeder’s rights, integrated circuit layouts (“mask work”) and databases.

As a postgraduate researcher, it is important that you pay attention to the IP issues that surround research activities and be familiar with the University's [IP Policy](#) which covers how you should handle IP and how the University deals with attribution, publication and commercialisation.

If you wish to discuss the IP implications of your research, you should do so with your supervisor in the first instance and then with the Research and Knowledge Exchange (RKE) team (email: ip@aston.ac.uk).

Patents are often of particular interest. A patent grants monopoly rights for a limited time (typically 20 years) in a specific jurisdiction, which can be extremely valuable. **If you are working on an idea that may be patentable, please contact RKE well in advance of submitting anything for publication (even if it is a poster) to develop a plan which will optimise the academic, impact and commercial potential of your idea.**

3.7 Using your own Published Work

When you use the results of your own published work in your final thesis, you will need to give clear indication of this by using appropriate citation of the original source (your published work, citing yourself where appropriate) in the relevant chapter. If you published with others, it is also important to acknowledge your co-authors and their contribution to the publication.

In terms of re-using your published work in your thesis, it is advisable to find out from the editor of the journal if you transferred the copyrights when you published your articles and if so, get formal approval from the copyright owners (publisher) to re-use the material (your published work) in your thesis.

Lastly, it is important to remember that when you are re-using your published work in your thesis, you need to ensure that the writing style matches (content and formatting etc.) the rest of the thesis and you it might be useful to add additional information (e.g. background info, relevant literature, more detail about results etc. – as appropriate depending on your research) where appropriate to ensure the logical flow and coherence of the thesis as a whole. Please also make sure that you discuss these issues with your supervisors.

[3.8 Change of Circumstances, Absences, Changes to Mode or Location of Study](#)

Absence from Research Programme

You must advise your Supervisor or, if unavailable, another appropriate member of staff (e.g. Associate Supervisor, [PGR Progression Team](#)) of any illness, vacation or other occasions when you will be absent from the University or from your research, or of any other circumstances likely to affect your work. Any vacation needs to be requested and approved through the PGR Progression Team *in advance* of being taken.

Please be aware that an extended period of lack of communication, without good reason, may lead to your Supervisor recommending that you be

withdrawn from your research programme (see Regulation 11c of the [General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis](#) for more information).

Overseas Students Based on Campus (Student Visa): Authorised Absences

As part of the Points-Based Immigration System (Tier4/Student Visa), Aston University as an educational sponsor for overseas students who come to study in the UK on the Aston campus is responsible for monitoring student attendance and must record all different types of student absences for overseas students. Under the UK Visas & Immigration Services (UKVI) regulations, if you have a Tier4/Student Visa you *must* be present on the University premises for the purpose of your research studies, for the entire duration of your course, unless you apply for, and are granted, a monitored 'authorised absence' from your College, for a specific period of time. If you expect to undertake research at another organisation in the UK, for example at a different university, we are required to report this to the Home Office so that you have the correct permission to be away from the Aston campus. Please contact a member of the Visa Compliance Team, through The Hub (thehub@aston.ac.uk; telephone 0121 204 4007) for advice.

If you need to leave the UK during your research programme you *must* obtain written permission from the [PGR Progression Team](#) for short periods of absence, for example to undertake research overseas, to attend an overseas conference, to return home due to bereavement, an illness or for a family celebration. All vacation time must be approved in advance, even if it is spent in the UK, including on campus. These requirements continue until you submit your **final** thesis; if you return home once you have submitted your thesis for examination (or at any time prior to submission of the final bound thesis), the Visa Compliance Team should be informed. Please ensure you have the correct visa if you return to the UK from overseas for your *viva voce* examination.

If your absence is approved, you will be given a Letter of Authorised Absence which you must show at immigration when you return to the UK. It is essential that you inform the PGR Progression Team of any absence as soon as possible. ***Please note that the UK Visas & Immigration Services (UKVI) may not allow you to re-enter the UK if you do not have written permission from Aston University to be absent from your studies.***

It is very important that those students under the Tier 4/Student Visa system keep up-to-date with current immigration regulations as these may change in the future.

You should **check** the International Student Support Unit (ISSU) website, your emails, MAP and Blackboard regularly for updates. Further information can be found at: <https://www2.aston.ac.uk/current-students/hub/iss/visas>

Engagement Monitoring

May we also remind you that you have an obligation to record your attendance to the University every two weeks. This can be achieved by scanning your university ID card in a dedicated study space, asking your support staff or supervisor to log an engagement each time you see them.

This is extremely important, failure to log your attendance on a repeated basis may lead to further action such as visa cancellation and withdrawal.

Further information can be found at:

<https://www.aston.ac.uk/current-students/support-services/international/aston-students/engagement>

Short absence

A short absence can be requested up to 60 days for illness or other personal circumstances. This will not change the submission date for your thesis or other deadlines for progression milestones such as the Qualifying Report or Annual Reports. You should discuss your request with your Supervisor and contact the PGR Progression Team if you need to take a short absence. If you are on a Tier 4/Student Visa this should not affect your visa provided the absence does not exceed 60 days.

Leave of Absence/Suspension of Study

In certain circumstances (e.g. documented ill-health), it is possible to take a leave of absence from your research to reflect the actual time lost. It is very important that this is done at the appropriate time, when the illness or other sufficient cause is current or imminent and supporting evidence is available. A leave of absence cannot normally be granted in the following circumstances:

- for a retrospective period;
- for a period of less than 60 days;
- for more than 12 months consecutively and more than 24 months in total for the duration of the programme;
- for periods of employment unless it is an authorised placement.

You should discuss leave of absence with your Supervisor before you submit an application. You can request a leave of absence from your MAP homepage. You will need to give an explanation of your reasons and should upload any supporting evidence. The request will need to be considered by the Director of Research Degree Programmes for your College. The PGR Progression Team will respond through MAP to let you know whether it has been approved so you should check your student homepage regularly.

If you are in receipt of a stipend, this will normally be suspended during the period of leave (except in the case of authorised sick leave which is permitted by some funders, usually for a limited period). If this is to happen, you will receive a letter notifying you of this when your leave of absence is confirmed. The letter will ask you to inform the PGR Progression Team when you are returning so that the reinstatement of your stipend can be arranged.

You should also be aware that a leave of absence will affect the date when your Annual Report will be due and the date for submission of your thesis. For example, if your research start date is 1 October and you are granted a six month leave of absence, your Annual Report would change from being due on 30 September to being due on 31 March.

It is important to note that you will not be able to work on your research during your leave of absence and will not have access to facilities such as the Library or to supervision so this route cannot be used to gain additional time. If you need additional time, you should seek an extension.

If you are on leave of absence, you will still need to complete the annual re-enrolment process via MAP.

If you hold a Tier 4/ Student Visa, you may be required to leave the UK during your period of absence and your current visa may be cancelled. Please contact the [International Student Advice Team](#) for help prior to requesting your absence so that you can make an informed choice about your situation.

Maternity/Parental Leave

The maternity/parental leave policy is currently under development and pending approval and will be made available to all postgraduate researchers in due course.

Extensions

All postgraduate researchers are expected to submit their theses within the standard duration of the period of study and you will receive a reminder about your thesis submission date and the procedure for submission at least 6 months in advance of your submission date. If you have experienced delays, you can apply for an extension of up-to 12 months. Extensions into year 4 (full-time) or 6 (part-time) are not guaranteed but will normally be considered favourably provided you can demonstrate satisfactory progress and a viable timeline to completion. The extension period is for writing up and all data collection and fieldwork should have been completed within the standard study period.

No extension request will be progressed unless all supervision meeting records and Annual Reports are up-to-date and the required milestones have been successfully completed. You will need to submit an extension request with the support of your Supervisor to the [PGR Progression Team](#) at least 3 months before your thesis submission date. The request will be considered by the College Director of Research Degree Programmes. It may be approved or approved subject to conditions. If it is rejected, you will need to submit by the due date or you may be withdrawn from the programme. In this case, you will have the opportunity to make representations against the withdrawal decision in line with the process outlined in Regulation 11e of the [General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis](#).

If you are granted an extension, a continuation fee will be charged after 6 months of the start date of the extension period (ie at 3.5 years for full-time and 6.5 years for part-time postgraduate researchers).

Extensions beyond 4 years (full-time) and 7 years (part-time) require a Waiver of Regulations and will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. Please see section below re additional considerations/extenuating circumstances.

Additional Considerations/Extenuating Circumstances

If you experience an unexpected event, such as an illness, accident or bereavement, that impacts your ability to meet the deadlines for the Qualifying Report, Annual Reports, the thesis submission deadline or your Qualifying Report or thesis *viva voce* examination date, you should discuss this with your Supervisor in the first instance. It is important that you do so in a timely manner, as close as possible to the event that has affected you and, wherever possible, before the milestone or thesis submission deadline or *viva voce* date. You may also seek guidance from the PGR

Tutor for your College or the [PGR Progression Team](#). In evidenced circumstances, it may be possible to seek an extension to a deadline, for example through a request for a waiver of a regulation; such requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis and require the support of your Supervisor. You should be aware that it is unlikely that a request will be considered favourably if you are not up-to-date with your quarterly supervisory meeting reports and other progression expectations, with the exception of those that have been impacted by the unexpected event.

Long term issues, such as ongoing health/personal/financial issues, which affect your ability to research or your ability to perform generally, do not count as exceptional circumstances. If you are affected in this way, you should discuss the situation with your Supervisor in the first instance; if you have a disability please speak to the University's Disability and Academic Support Team (see [section 1.8](#)) so that support recommendations can be implemented if required.

In the case of an extension to the thesis submission deadline beyond year 4/7, if you need to make such a request you will need to discuss with your supervisory team well in advance of your final submission deadline and submit the required documentation to the [PGR Progression Team](#). Such requests need the support of your Supervisor and the College Director of Research Degree Programmes and will be considered by the Dean of Graduate School on behalf of the Graduate School Management Committee. In considering the request, the Director of Research Degree Programmes and the Dean of Graduate School will need to be satisfied that there are serious extenuating circumstances which have impacted progress and also a viable timeline to completion within a reasonable timeframe. If the request is rejected, you will need to submit by the due date or you may be withdrawn from the programme. In this case, you will have the opportunity to make representations against the withdrawal decision in line with the process outlined in Regulation 11e of the [General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis](#).

If you are granted an extension beyond 4/7 years, you will be liable for a further fee from the start of the extension period.

Changes to Mode of Study

It may be possible to change from full-time to part-time mode of study if your circumstances change provided your College/School offers a part-time route for the programme you are on and you have the approval of your supervisory team and Deputy/Associate Dean Research. However, students on a Tier 4/Student Visa would need to seek advice from the Visa Compliance Team as this may not be permitted under the terms of the visa. It is also not possible to switch mode of study during the extension period. If you are permitted to change mode of study, the PGR team will advise you regarding the new submission date. Please email the [PGR Progression Team](#) if you are considering change to mode of study, for further guidance.

Changes to Location of Study

Unless you are on a distance learning programme or there is a prior arrangement in place for you to study off-campus (for example, as part of a collaborative partnership or cotutelle programme), your normal place of study will be Aston. Any changes to this must be discussed with and approved in advance by the Deputy/Associate Dean Research. Postgraduate researchers who are on a Tier 4/Student Visa also need to discuss with the [International Student Advice Team](#) well before taking any steps to

change location of study. Please email the [PGR Progression Team](#) for further guidance. See also sections [3.8](#) and [3.11](#) on placements and travel abroad.

Withdrawal from the Programme

If you are considering withdrawing from the programme, please discuss with your supervisor in the first instance as there may be other options such as a Leave of Absence rather than a permanent withdrawal. You can also seek guidance from the [PGR Progression Team](#). If withdrawal is the only option, please email the [PGR Progression Team](#) stating the reason and effective date for the withdrawal.

Transfer to Another Institution

If you wish to transfer to another programme or institution (for example, because your supervisor is leaving and you would like to join them), we recommend that you contact the admissions team at the institution that you wish to transfer to, to check what their arrangements are for postgraduate researcher transfers. If you need a reference from Aston as part of your application to transfer, please speak to your supervisor. If you need a letter confirming your registration at Aston and/or progression, please email the [PGR Progression Team](#).

Before you make any arrangements to transfer, we would advise you to consider carefully the following:

- If you are in receipt of a studentship, it is unlikely in most cases that you will be able to transfer the studentship so you should seek advice from the funder before formalising any transfer arrangement. Please discuss with the [PGR Progression Team](#) if you are unsure what the funder's rules are.
- If you receive funding through Student Finance then you will need to tell the relevant Student Finance organisation that you have left your studies. You may be able to do this by logging onto your on line account with Student Finance and making changes to your application on line. You could also contact Student Finance by phone. The University will also contact Student Finance to confirm that you have left your studies at Aston. We recommend that you contact the student finance team at the institution that you wish to transfer to, to check what their arrangements are for postgraduate researcher transfers.
- If you are on a Tier 4/Student Visa, you must seek advice from the [International Student Advice Team](#) before you make any arrangements for transfer.
- You should also check what the institution's regulations are regarding exemption from any mandatory training and their equivalent of the Aston Qualifying Report (QR) process. It may be that you would need to register as a new starter rather than transferring to the same stage of your research. We recommend you consider this carefully before making a final decision.
- If you have transferred to another institution, you will no longer have access to Aston facilities or email even if you live locally and/or have an Aston based Associate Supervisor.

Once you have a confirmed place at another institution, you will need to make a request in writing to withdraw from your programme at Aston via the [PGR Progression Team](#). Please state the effective date of the withdrawal.

3.9 Placements

It is a University requirement that all postgraduate researchers must secure approval from the relevant Deputy/Associate Dean Research before taking part in off campus study, for example, placements, professional internships (e.g. BBSRC PIPS) or away mini-projects. Detailed guidance on placements is currently under review and will be made available in due course. In the meantime, please email a request for change of research location, with a supporting statement from your supervisor, to the [PGR Progression Team](#) well in advance of arranging your off campus study. Please include the reason for the request and the dates. If you are on a Tier 4/Student Visa, you are also required to contact a member of the [International Student Advice Team](#) to secure the relevant permission for change of research location.

3.10 Employment

It is your responsibility to ensure that any work (paid or unpaid employment) undertaken allows sufficient time for your research programme to be completed on time; loss of time for your research because of employment will not be an acceptable reason for an extension or appeal. You are, therefore, strongly advised to discuss any employment opportunity with your Supervisor. If you wish to teach at Aston, you must comply with the Teaching Hours Policy which limits the number of hours you can teach per week.

Postgraduate researchers who are subject to immigration restrictions must not work more hours than is permitted by the visa in their current passport. It is each postgraduate researcher's personal responsibility to check the requirements specified in their own visa. Please note that there are no term-times for those on research programmes. The number of hours specified in your visa applies to paid and unpaid work undertaken throughout the calendar year. Please be aware that gaining experience of teaching, including as a requirement for one of the University's programmes offered through the University's Education Team, may be as unpaid work, which could be prohibited by some visa categories (such as the Visitor visas) or may contribute towards your minimum working hours (20 hours if you are on a student visa) so you must *always* check that you have the correct immigration permission to avoid breaching your visa conditions. **We strongly advise you to contact the International Student Advice Team** (email astoninternational@aston.ac.uk) **prior to undertaking any paid/unpaid work to ensure you are compliant with your visa conditions.**

Please note even spending a minute over the minimum stipulated weekly hours results in a breach of your visa conditions and will have to be reported as a crime to UKVI for breaching immigration rules.

3.11 Annual Leave/Vacation

Please note that the six weeks' vacation referred to in Regulation 9.2 of the [General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis](#) is a total of 30 working days (excluding days when the University is officially closed for Christmas, Easter and Bank Holidays) across the full 52-week calendar year. Part-time postgraduate

researchers are expected to pursue research for the equivalent of 24 weeks per year and their leave reflects this (15 days). Vacation leave must be taken in full days.

You should discuss any arrangements for taking vacation leave with your Supervisor *in advance* of doing so. Once your Supervisor has agreed your vacation, you must formally request the leave by emailing the [PGR Progression Team](#), copying in your Supervisor. This email has to be sent to the [PGR Progression Team](#) before the vacation commences. By copying your Supervisor in on the leave request email to the [PGR Progression Team](#), this will be taken as confirmation that your Supervisor has approved the leave being requested. The email should have the Subject Line 'Vacation Leave Request' and mention whether you require a letter confirming your authorised leave from the programme. The email should also include the start and end dates of your leave so that the leave period can be recorded on MAP.

You can also expect your Supervisor to let you know when they will be absent for a prolonged period. If you are on a Tier 4/Student Visa you should also read [Section 3.8](#) above.

3.12 Travel Abroad

All postgraduate researchers who need to undertake travel for **University business** must comply with the procedures set out in the [International Travel Procedure for PGR Students](#).

University business includes travel for;

- conferences,
- fieldwork,
- placements
- any other trips directly related to your research or study regardless of whether the travel is University or self-funded. **Vacation trips or travel back home, if you are an international student, are NOT considered University business and are, therefore, not within the scope of this policy**

IMPORTANT: Failure to comply with the University procedure may mean that you are not covered under the University's insurance policy should you get into any difficulties.

The procedure(s) to be followed may vary depending on the reasons for travel and funding so please read the [International Travel Procedure for PGR Students](#) document to ensure that you are following the correct procedure.

The table below summarises the different process to be followed depending on the nature and purpose of the travel. It should be read in conjunction with the more detailed step by step notes set out in the [International Travel Procedure for PGR Students](#)

Purpose of travel and funding	Eligibility/ available funding check	Ethical approval	Travel risk assessment	Approval process	Travel booking	Graduate School confirmation
Centrally funded conference travel (Research Student Development Fund)	Required as 1 st step – check with PGR Admin Team pgr_general@aston.ac.uk	Not required	Required for all risk levels. Follow the process for your College and seek further guidance from your College Research Office if unclear	Application for funding needs to be approved by Director of Research Degree Programme before you can register or book travel	Flights and accommodation must be booked via Click Travel. Your College Research Office can advise	Please notify PGR Admin Team once travel booking is confirmed and before travel. Please include dates of the trip
Research grant/ Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) or other funded conference travel	Please check with the relevant Principal Investigator/ project manager or your College Research Office	Not required	Required for all risk levels. Follow the process for your College and seek further guidance from your College Research Office if unclear	Please seek approval from the relevant Principal Investigator/ project manager or your College Research Office before you register or book travel	Flights and accommodation must be booked via Click Travel. Your College Research Office can advise	Please notify PGR Admin Team once travel booking is confirmed and before travel. Please include dates of the trip
Self-funded conference travel	Not required	Not required	Required for all risk levels. Follow the process for your College and seek further guidance from your College Research Office if unclear	Formal approval not required, provided supervisor is aware of and supports the trip	Booking via Click Travel not required	Please email confirmation of risk assessment and authorisation to travel to PGR Admin Team before travel. Please include dates of the trip
Research grant/ Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP)/University or other funded fieldwork/data collection trip	Please check with the relevant Principal Investigator/ project manager or your College Research Office	Ethical approval is required before any data collection/fieldwork and related travel can be undertaken. Please follow University/ College guidance and procedure for ethical approval	Required for all risk levels. Follow the process for your College and seek further guidance from your College Research Office if unclear	Please seek approval from the relevant Principal Investigator/ project manager or your College Research Office	Flights and accommodation must be booked via Click Travel. Your College Research Office can advise	Please email confirmation of ethical approval and risk assessment and authorisation to travel to PGR Admin Team before travel. Please include dates of the trip
Self-funded fieldwork/data collection trip	Not required	Ethical approval is required before any data	Required for all risk levels. Follow the process for your College and	Formal approval not required, provided supervisor is	Booking via Click Travel not required	Please email confirmation of ethical approval and risk

		collection/fieldwork and related travel can be undertaken. Please follow University/ College guidance and procedure for ethical approval	seek further guidance from your College Research Office if unclear	aware of and supports the trip		assessment and authorisation to travel to PGR Admin Team before travel. Please include dates of the trip
Placement/ secondment	Separate policy and procedure applies – details tbc					
Vacation	Not required	Not required	Not required	Supervisor must authorise annual leave	Booking via Click Travel not required	Please submit annual leave request to PGR Admin Team before travel. Please include dates of the trip

Regardless of the type of business travel you are undertaking, the following points should be noted:

- **All travel plans must be discussed with your supervisor as a first step, as supervisor support is essential in the approval process.**
- **Before you make any travel plans Check the latest travel advice at the [Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office](#) and www.drum-cussac.net (enter your University email address, click register and follow the instructions online).**
- **Information about the University's International Travel Policy and related forms and guidance can be accessed [here](#).**
- **Approval must be secured before you register for a conference or book travel, or incur any expenditure, unless you are funding the costs yourself. Requests for retrospective approval will NOT be considered.**
- **Before you travel, it is your responsibility to check whether a visa is required and to seek advice from the Visa Compliance Team at the earliest opportunity.**

[3.13 Appeals, Complaints and Disciplinary Regulations](#)

Information about appeals, complaints and disciplinary regulations is accessible via the web links below:

[Academic appeals webpage](#)

[Complaints procedure webpage](#)

[Disciplinary regulations webpage](#)

[Exceptional circumstances webpage](#)

Section 1.6 details mechanisms for providing feedback or raising general concerns about your programme. However, if you need to make an individual complaint you will need to follow the University's [complaints procedure](#). If you need to appeal the outcome of any assessment including Qualifying Report or final viva, you will need to follow the [Academic Appeals Procedure](#).

3.14 Teaching Hours Policy

Postgraduate researchers who wish to undertake teaching or related duties should read the Policy on Teaching Hours below:

POLICY ON RESEARCH STUDENT TEACHING HOURS

The Graduate School Management Committee has approved the following recommendations in respect of teaching hours undertaken by research students across the University.

The policy does not apply to members of Aston University staff who are contracted to deliver teaching and are also following an Aston University research degree; it is expected that the dual commitment will have been discussed with appropriate colleagues prior to embarking on the research degree.

Schools are responsible for implementing the policy:

1. A student's interest in undertaking teaching should be discussed with their Supervisor when the Training Needs Analysis form is completed, and subsequently be reviewed annually;
2. Research students should have the agreement of their main Supervisor before agreeing to any teaching commitments. A form confirming Supervisor approval should be presented to the 'recruiting' member of academic staff.
3. Research students should undertake a maximum of 6 hours teaching in any given week, to include preparation, contact and assessment time;
4. Research students should be provided with a breakdown detailing how the number of teaching hours is arrived at, i.e. identifying time allocated for preparation, contact and assessment, noting that this may differ according to the type of provision to be undertaken and the year of study the student is in;
5. Research students will not normally be expected to lecture until their third full-time year of research, and not before their second full-time year of research;
6. In accordance with the University's Policy for Required Development Activity for those Engaged in Learning and Teaching (AU-LTC-18-1395-A):
 - Graduate Teaching Assistants are required to undertake:
 - the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (PGCert) delivered by the Education Team;
 - a minimum of six hours of Continuing Professional Development activity (not necessary while undertaking the PGCert);
 - peer observation.
 - postgraduate research students who deliver four or more sessions of occasional teaching per academic year are required to undertake:
 - the Introduction to Learning and Teaching Practice (20-credit, level 6 module) delivered by the Education Team;
 - a minimum of six hours of Continuing Professional Development activity;
 - peer observation.

- postgraduate research students who deliver fewer than four sessions of occasional teaching per academic year are required to undertake peer observation, and are encouraged and supported to undertake Continuing Professional Development activity;
7. Module Leaders are responsible for the academic leadership and management of modules, which includes providing advice and support to all staff contributing to their module (as detailed in the Module Leader Role Descriptor, AU-ELTC-17-1000-D).
 8. HR approved rates of pay are:
 - A multiplier of 2.5 should be used for lectures. This means that for every one hour of face to face teaching delivered another 1.5 hours of preparation is needed. This applies to all lectures other than those for which an exception has been agreed via Graduate School Management Committee (in consultation with HR). This means that a student can undertake a maximum of 2 paid lectures (5 hours with preparation time) per week;
 - A multiplier of 1.5 should be used for tutorials, seminars and laboratory sessions. This means that for every one hour of face to face teaching delivered another half hour of preparation is needed. This applies to all sessions other than those for which an exception has been agreed. This means that a student can undertake a maximum of 4 such sessions (6 hours with preparation time) per week. For laboratory sessions where the preparation is required at the beginning of the module, rather than before each session, payment will be made for an agreed number of preparation hours and the multiplier of 1.5 will not apply (approved by Graduate School Management Committee, Minute 17/114, and confirmed with HR).
 9. The only circumstances in which a research student might be provided with unpaid teaching opportunities (where paid teaching is unavailable) is for a student requiring teaching experience in order to complete the Introduction to Learning and Teaching Practice course offered by the Education Team (formerly the Centre for Learning Innovation and Professional Practice (CLIPP) (Graduate School Management Committee, Minute 17/025:4)). For all students subject to immigration restrictions, any voluntary/unpaid hours contribute to the maximum number of working hours permitted by their visa.
 10. It is the responsibility of the School engaging any research student for teaching work to provide appropriate induction and training, including health and safety training (e.g. evacuation of the building).

IMPORTANT NOTE:

*It is the student's responsibility to ensure that any work undertaken allows sufficient time for their research programme to be completed on time; loss of research time because of teaching hours undertaken will not be an acceptable reason for an extension or appeal. **Overseas students should additionally ensure that ANY work undertaken is as specified by their immigration permission.***

3.15 Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS)

International postgraduate researchers in the Colleges of Engineering and Physical Sciences and Health and Life Sciences who have an Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) certificate will need to apply for a new ATAS certificate if the research project brief changes from that originally, or most recently, submitted. The application for a new ATAS certificate must happen in a timely manner.

The formal 3-monthly meetings with your Supervisor provide an opportunity to ensure that you review the project brief submitted for your current ATAS certificate on a regular basis to ensure that the brief has not changed. If, at any time during your research programme, there is a change that is so significant that it results in a change of direction relating to the research, your Supervisor should provide the PGR Progression Team with a new project proposal so that you can re-apply for an ATAS. You must re-apply for your ATAS certificate within 28 calendar days of receiving confirmation of these changes.

If you need more time to complete your research degree programme and the end date of your project is postponed for a period of more than 3 calendar months, then you must re-apply for an ATAS certificate within 28 calendar days of receiving confirmation of these changes.

If there is any doubt as to whether the change is significant, a new ATAS should be applied for. Please note that this is a free application process and only takes a few weeks. More information about ATAS is available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/academic-technology-approval-scheme>

If you require guidance on this matter, please contact the International Student Advice Team on astoninternational@aston.ac.uk.

4. Progression and Key Milestones

Whilst your research project will be unique, there are a number of progression milestones which all PGR students need to meet and it is important that you understand the requirements for each as failure to complete the milestone successfully may result in withdrawal from the Programme.

4.1 Overview of Key Milestones and Timing

Degree	Learning Agreement	Training Needs Analysis	Supervisory Meeting Reports	Qualifying Report	Second/Fourth Year Progress Review	Annual Reports
PhD full-time	1 month from start date	3 months from start date; to be reviewed and re-submitted annually	Every 3 months for duration of programme	10 months from start of programme; Viva to be held 12 months from start of programme	24 months from start of programme	Year 1: Qualifying Report Year 2: Progress Review; Year 3 (and Year 4 if applicable): Annual Report or thesis submission
PhD part-time	1 month from start date	3 months from start date; to be reviewed and re-submitted annually	Every 3 months for duration of programme	20 months from start of programme; Viva to be held 24 months from start of programme	48 months from start of programme	Year 1: Annual Report Year 2: Qualifying Report Year 3: Annual Report Year 4: Progress Review Year 5: Annual Report Year 6 (and Year 7 if applicable): Annual Report or thesis submission
DBA	Same as part-time PhD with additional learning agreement required within 1 month of entering research phase					
MD full-time	1 month from start date	3 months from start date; to be reviewed and	Every 3 months for duration of programme	10 months from start of programme; Viva to be held 24 months from	24 months from start of programme	Year 1: Qualifying Report Year 2: Progress Review or

		re-submitted annually		start of programme		Thesis submission Year 3 (if applicable) Annual Report or thesis submission
MD part-time	1 month from start date	3 months from start date; to be reviewed and re-submitted annually	Every 3 months for duration of programme	20 months from start of programme; Viva to be held 24 months from start of programme	48 months from start of programme	Year 1: Annual Report Year 2: Qualifying Report Year 3: Annual Report Year 4: Progress Review or thesis submission Year 5 (if applicable): Annual Report Year or thesis submission
Other Professional Doctorates*	To be advised by PGR Progression Team in welcome letter when joining research phase					

*DOptom, Doctor of Hearing Therapy, EdD

4.2 Qualifying Report

A major element of assessment for all postgraduate researchers is the Qualifying Report which has to be submitted by the end of month 10 for full-time researchers and before the end of month 20 for part-time researchers. Please see Regulation 8.3 of the [General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis](#) for more detail, e.g. length of report, assessment process and possible outcomes. Successful completion of the Qualifying Report is a prerequisite for progression for all research programmes (except MA/MSc Research).

Further information and guidance, including the template forms, is available on the [Aston Graduate School: Postgraduate Research Students - Researcher Development](#) course on Blackboard. The minimum length of the Qualifying Report is 6,000 words and the maximum length is 12,000 words. A plan for achieving submission of the thesis at the end of the standard duration of the doctoral degree, indicating that all research work will have been completed by then (i.e. by the end of three years for a full-time PhD or professional doctorate), must be submitted with your Qualifying Report.

At the time of submission, you will be required to upload the electronic copy of your Qualifying Report to Turnitin, the University's Text-Matching Software.

You will be sent specific guidance on how to upload your submission to Turnitin in advance of your submission date. Please ensure that you follow the process to the end and receive confirmation that your upload has been successful.

To ensure data protection, your upload to Turnitin will not be stored on either the Turnitin or University Servers. You are, therefore, required to submit a separate electronic copy of your Qualifying Report to the [PGR Progression Team](#). The submission to Turnitin does **not** replace your electronic submission.

The report generated by Turnitin may be made available to your Examining Team, Supervisor or Director of Degree Programmes who may discuss any concerns raised by the report with you.

Your Qualifying Report viva will be arranged by your supervisory team.

Following the Qualifying Report viva, you will receive confirmation of the progression decision and a copy of the Report. If the decision is to recommend withdrawal from the programme or transfer to MPhil (if applicable), you will be offered the opportunity to make representations/appeal the decision (see [Section 3.13](#) for more information about this).

There are Graduate School Training Programme courses on 'Writing your Qualifying Report' and 'Preparing for the Qualifying Report *viva voce*' – see [Section 6.1](#).

4.3 Progress Review at End of Second Full-Time/Fourth Part-Time Year

Details of the progression task to be completed by PhD and professional doctorate candidates at the end of the second full-time, or fourth part-time, year of research are detailed in Regulation 8.5 of the [General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis](#). The options are an oral presentation, a paper or an empirical chapter; the choice of task to be undertaken will be agreed in consultation with your Supervisor. Template forms will be sent to you nearer the time and can be requested from the [PGR Progression Team](#).

If you fail the task you will need to re-take it. **It is important to note that you will not be able to progress until you have satisfactorily completed this task.**

4.4 Annual Report

The requirements for Annual Reports are set out in Regulation 8.2 of the [General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis](#). In the year of the Qualifying Report, the Annual Report is submitted to the Director of Research Degree Programmes by the independent examining panel of the Qualifying Report. In all other years, the Report is submitted to the Director of Research Degree Programmes by your Supervisor following discussion with you, together with details of the research and training development activities you have already undertaken and those you have identified following a review of training needs with your Supervisor. Courses offered through the Graduate School Training Programme should be booked on Core and recorded on MAP (see [section 6.4](#)).

If your work is satisfactory and you have completed any additional requirements for the year in question, you will be allowed to proceed to the next year of your programme.

Part of the Annual Report will be completed after discussion between you and your Supervisor and you will also be invited to provide confidential feedback via Part B of the Report. This provides you with the opportunity to comment on the supervision that you have received over the previous year, in confidence, and will not be shown to your Supervisor without your permission.

Confirmation of your progression and a copy of the Annual Report will be sent to you once the report has been reviewed and approved by the Director of Research Degree Programmes.

Please note that the submission of Annual Reports is a mandatory requirement and requests for leave, extensions or funding such as the Research Student Development Fund will not be considered until all outstanding reports have been submitted. Progression is not possible unless you have successfully completed the Qualifying Report and the Second year/Fourth year Progress Review.

4.5 Annual Reports in Final and/or Extension Year

Following feedback from postgraduate researchers and supervisors it has been agreed that the requirement for an annual progress report in the final and/or extension year will be waived if the researcher submits the final thesis before the Annual Report deadline. If the thesis is not submitted before the Annual Report deadline, the Report will need to be submitted.

5. Research Supervision

An effective relationship with your supervisory team is important to ensure the success of your research project. You should meet with your supervisory team at the earliest opportunity to discuss your project and plan future meetings as well as clarifying expectations, roles and responsibilities.

5.1 Supervisory Team

All postgraduate researchers will have a supervisory team consisting of a Main Supervisor and one or more Associate Supervisor(s). For the majority of researchers this team will be in place before the start of the programme. For researchers on some specific programmes, the supervisory team will be appointed once they have completed the taught stage and enter the research phase of the programme.

Your Supervisors are your academic mentors and primary source of all help and guidance. You should develop a good working relationship with your Supervisors and maintain regular contact (see Regulation 8.1 of the [General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis](#)).

Main Supervisor

Within this team, a Main Supervisor is clearly nominated and the individual contribution of the Associate Supervisor(s) is specified in a meeting with the student at the outset of the programme and recorded in the Learning Agreement.

[The Code of Practice for Research Degrees](#) includes an outline of the researcher and supervisor responsibilities to each other regarding the research; these may be expanded upon or clarified by your College and will be included in the Learning Agreement you discuss with your Supervisor shortly after you start your research.

Associate Supervisor

All postgraduate researchers will have at least one Associate Supervisor as detailed in Regulation 6.3 of the [General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis](#). In exceptional cases such as, for example, the DBA and the MIBTP programmes, there may be only a 'Process' supervisor during the taught phase of the programme.

The role of any Associate Supervisor in your research should be clarified at the meeting to discuss the Learning Agreement and be documented in it. The Associate Supervisor(s) should be involved jointly with your Supervisor in at least some of the meetings you have about your research and may, if nominated by the Supervisor to attend in their place, also attend the Qualifying Report *viva voce* examination as an observer.

5.2 Learning Agreement

A Learning Agreement should be jointly completed by all postgraduate researchers and Supervisors at the start of the programme. A template will be emailed to you by the PGR team at the start of the programme. This document forms an agreement between a researcher and their Supervisors, setting out agreed responsibilities of each party. The Learning Agreement should be completed within one month of your

start date at a meeting involving the Supervisor, the Associate Supervisor(s) and you. You and your Supervisor should each retain a copy, and the original should be sent to the PGR Progression Team.

Discussion of the Learning Agreement should also involve clarifying the role of Associate Supervisor(s) in the supervision of the researcher and the details should be included on the form for future reference.

DBA researchers will need to complete an initial Learning Agreement with their 'Process' Supervisor within 1 month of the start of the programme and another Learning Agreement with their supervisory team within 1 month of the start of the research phase.

5.3 Frequency of Meetings

It is recommended that you should meet with your Supervisors at least once every 2 weeks. In the early stages of your research, meetings with your Supervisors should be quite frequent. In the latter stages, when you become more independent, these meetings may become less frequent, but perhaps more focused on specific aspects of the research or thesis. There is a requirement for a formal, structured meeting at least every 3 months for the duration of the programme (Regulation 8.1 of the [General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis](#)).

5.4 Supervisory Meeting Records

You should keep a record of **all** meetings with your supervisory team. The format of these records can vary depending on what works best for you and your Supervisors. The formal 3 monthly meetings must be recorded using the Record of Supervisory Meeting Form available via MAP. The 3-monthly records of supervisory meetings provide an important record of your research as you progress through the research degree programme. At least three 3-monthly meeting reports are required in order for annual progression to be confirmed and the reports will be reviewed if progress is considered to be unsatisfactory at any point. There are Guidance Notes on how to upload your Meeting Forms to MAP in the '3-monthly supervisor meeting reports (3MR) information' area of the Blackboard Module Aston Graduate School: Postgraduate Research Students - Researcher Development.

5.5 Supervision Concerns

If you are in any way unhappy about your interaction with your Supervisors, you should discuss the issues with the PGR Tutor named on your Learning Agreement as a source of independent advice. The PGR Tutor's contact information is also provided on MAP. If you consider that the (PGR Tutor for your School or College is not independent of your supervisory team, you may approach the PGR Tutor from a different School/College – see contact list in [section 1.3](#). Provided the PGR Tutor does not consider anyone to be at risk and provided there is no legal obligation for these to be disclosed, your conversations with the PGR Tutor will remain confidential unless or until you confirm that you wish these to be formally noted and/or further action to be taken. This applies to issues which may be impacting your performance and/or progression (including, for example, any supervision issues), as well as personal and welfare issues.

You may also raise any concerns with your College Director of Research Degree Programmes (see contact list in [section 1.3](#)).

5.6 Changes of Supervision

If your supervisor or associate supervisor leaves, the College will need to assign a change of supervision unless you decide to leave/transfer with your supervisor/associate supervisor to their new institution (see [section 3.7](#)). The change of supervision will be confirmed in writing by the PGR Progression Team once it has been agreed. If you have any concerns regarding change of supervision please discuss with your College Director of Research Degree Programmes, or if you are in the BSS College, with the relevant Programme Director (see [Section 1.3](#) for contacts). If you wish to change supervisors, you will also need to discuss the reasons with your College Director of Research Degree Programmes. However, you should be aware that a change of supervision may not be possible depending on available research expertise and the funding arrangement – for example, if you are in receipt of a studentship linked to a specific project for which the supervisor is the Principal Investigator. The University can only guarantee change of supervision in cases where the supervisor is no longer at Aston. A supervisor who has left Aston can continue to be part of the supervisory team as an external associate supervisor, with the agreement of all the relevant parties but two Aston supervisors will be required and they will have the lead role in your supervision.

6. Researcher Development

There is a comprehensive range of development opportunities to support your wider personal, professional and career development as well as your skills as a researcher and we would encourage you to take advantage of these.

6.1 Graduate School Training Programme

In addition to the range of training and development opportunities provided by your College, the Graduate School draws on specific expertise and experience from across the University to deliver a Training Programme, co-ordinated by Dr Eren Bilgen, Researcher Development Advisor.

The Departments that contribute to the Training Programme are collectively known as the Graduate Development Team, comprising:

- Research and Knowledge Exchange (RKE)
- Careers and Placements
- Learning Development Centre (LDC)
- Library Services

The Graduate School Training Programme is available at the start of each term and is accessible from the Graduate School website and [via this link](#). The Training Programme is a comprehensive suite of personal and professional development opportunities for postgraduate researchers. The collection of courses and workshops covers a broad range of transferable skills that support your ability to succeed on your programme and skills that will prepare you for future employment. The training provision is mapped against the national Vitae Researcher Development Framework -) and in broad terms the workshops cover:

1. Domain A: Knowledge and Intellectual Abilities
2. Domain B: Personal Effectiveness
3. Domain C: Research Governance and Organisation
4. Domain D: Engagement, Influence and Impact

Access to the [Graduate School Training Programme](#) is an inclusive part of your learning experience at Aston, and we encourage you to talk to your Supervisor about which courses you should do and how you can schedule them over your period of research. Booking onto training courses is easy: follow the directions from the from the Training section of your MAP Research page, 'Find and Book a Training Course – log into Core HR' (or via <http://corehr.aston.ac.uk/>). Once logged into Core HR, select Training, and use the Book a Course option to find and book relevant courses).

Online Development Resources for Postgraduate Researchers

As a postgraduate researcher at Aston University, you are automatically enrolled on the Aston Graduate School: Postgraduate Research Students Blackboard course,

which enables you to access useful resources, webinars and join online training sessions.

Training videos, podcasts and resources include:

- Presentation Skills
- Preparing for Your Viva
- Academic Conference Tips
- The Good Doctorate
- Career Planning
- Project Managing Your Research
- Research Ethics
- Research Impact
- Library Skills
- Lunchtime Seminars
- Writing Retreats
- Mental Health and Wellbeing for Researchers

New online resources and videos are added to the Aston Graduate School: Postgraduate Research Students Blackboard course, so please access the course regularly to check for updates.

Additional Resources

The Vitae website has a wealth of resources and advice designed specifically for researchers and these resources are available for Aston postgraduate researchers. To access these resources for free, please register with Vitae using your Aston email address.

Three Minute Thesis (3MT®)

Three Minute Thesis (3MT) is a research communication competition where postgraduate researchers present their research and its significance in just three minutes. 3MT is a regular event organised by the Graduate School Development Team and postgraduate researchers are encouraged to participate, either as a presenter or attendee. More detailed information about the 3MT competition can be accessed on our Blackboard course.

Annual Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Research Conference

Working with the Aston Postgraduate Research Society (APRS), the Graduate School Development Team organise an annual interdisciplinary conference with a different theme each year. The conference will give you an opportunity to promote your work in an interdisciplinary environment, network with other postgraduate researchers and gain experience in communicating your ideas to a non-specialist audience from different disciplines.

6.2 Training and Development Requirements for PGRs

Successful and timely completion of your research degree will depend on developing a mixture of subject-specific and transferable skills. Many of these skills will also be important in your future life, whatever career choices you make. For this reason, postgraduate researchers at Aston are required to annually assess their current and future skills development needs and participate in suitable training and professional

development activities throughout their research degrees (please see Regulation 7 of the [General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis](#)).

Although the regulatory minimum requirement is that postgraduate researchers undertake 90 hours of appropriate skills training during their research degrees for a PhD/professional doctorate (60 hours for MD/MPhil), you are encouraged to complete up to 150 hours from across the four key skills domains in the national Vitae Researcher Development Framework.

The research training and development activities that can count towards skills training hours are:

- internal courses and workshops offered through the [Graduate School Training Programme](#)
- internal courses and seminars offered by your College – please see table below;
- poster presentations at conferences, seminars or poster competitions (10 hours per event);
- oral presentations at conferences/seminars (15 hours per event);
- Graduate School interdisciplinary seminar series (1 hour per seminar);
- Aston (University-wide) 3-Minute Thesis (3MT®) competition: 2 hours for training session; 3 hours for practice presentation and feedback session; 10 hours for participation in the competition; 1 hour for attendance at the competition (non-participants);
- attendance at 'Lunch with Professor/Doctor X' lecture series;
- participation in Aston's Introduction to Learning and Teaching Practice programme: 18 hours (being contact hours);
- participation in Aston's Postgraduate Certificate in Learning & Teaching in Higher Education: 27 hours (being contact hours);
- participation in Ethic Review Boards: 1 hour (maximum 5 hours per year);
- 'Other' activities for which you will need to provide evidence of attendance.

You are required to report details of the skills training undertaken to your Supervisor through your Annual Progress Report submission at the end of each year of your research (Regulation 8.2a of the [General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis](#)).

College	Programme (s)	Module(s)	Number of Skills Hours
Business & Social Sciences (BSS)	PhD	Philosophy of Social Science; Research Design, Practice and Ethics; Foundations in Qualitative Research;	80 hours

		Fundamentals in Quantitative Research	
	DBA	Introduction to Business and Management Research; Applied Research Methods; Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods; Professional Development and Research Impact	80 hours
Engineering & Physical Sciences (EPS)	PhD	EPS Research Skills	45 hours
Health & Life Sciences (HLS)	PhD/MD	Postgraduate Professional Development Module	40 hours

6.3 Training Needs Analysis

Postgraduate researchers at Aston are required to annually assess their current and future skills development needs and the Training Needs Analysis (TNA) process helps you to do this.

The TNA form, based on Vitae's [Researcher Development Framework](#) (RDF), is a tool to help you think about your strengths, reflect on your changing development needs, and identify areas for improvement. The TNA form is a live document that needs to be reviewed annually and can be modified taken into consideration your changing development needs. The TNA is most useful when used as part of a reflective conversation with your supervisors. They will be able to advise you on appropriate subject-specific skills development activities and suggest areas of focus for each year. A session to support you in making the most of your TNA process is available from the Researcher Development Advisor and you can find the details in the [Graduate School Training Programme 2023/24](#).

Supervisors and postgraduate researchers should review the PGR's research training and development needs within 3 months of starting the programme and complete the Training Needs Analysis form. The template form will be emailed to you at the start of the programme and the completed form should be returned to the [PGR Progression Team](#) within 3 months of your start date. Your skills development should be reviewed at least annually, at the time of the Annual Progress Report, and you should keep a record of training undertaken/to be taken via the My Research Training and Development task on MAP (see below). Details of training should be reported through the Annual Report submission (see [section 4.1](#)).

Postgraduate researchers interested in accessing teaching opportunities are advised to discuss this with their Supervisor when they discuss their training needs.

6.4 Recording Your Research Training and Development Activities via MAP

All postgraduate researchers are required to record their research training and development activities (e.g. Graduate School Induction, courses from the Graduate School Training Programme or external courses, conference attendance, seminars) on My Aston Portal (MAP).

Courses offered through the [Graduate School Training Programme](#) can be selected in MAP and will show the duration and the Vitae Researcher Development Framework skills domain for the activity (i.e. one of Knowledge and intellectual abilities (A); Personal effectiveness (B); Research governance and organisation (C); Engagement, influence and impact (D)). For any external courses, you will be able to indicate the number of hours attended and the appropriate skills domain; you will also be expected to upload documentary evidence of attendance to MAP. Through MAP, you are able to print out a list of all of the research training and development activities you have recorded for submission with your Annual Report or as requested by your Supervisor.

There is detailed guidance on how to record your research training and development activities in the 'Research Training and Development on MAP' area of the Blackboard Module [Aston Graduate School: Postgraduate Research Students - Researcher Development](#).

6.5 Subject-Specific/College Training

All postgraduate researchers undertake some compulsory research skills and/or methods training, normally within the first year of the programme. Exemption from these requirements (for example, because of prior learning) is rare and will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the relevant Director of Research Degree Programmes.

College of Business and Social Sciences

All PhD students in the College of Business and Social Sciences are required to undertake four compulsory taught modules in year 1 which they must pass as well as the Qualifying Report in order to proceed. Details of the modules, assessments and related PG Cert award will be provided by the College at induction.

The administration of the PhD taught modules is managed by the College Programme Office and you can direct any queries to bss_support@aston.ac.uk

All DBA students undertake compulsory taught modules in year 1 of the programme and must pass all these modules (see below) as well as the Qualifying Report in order to proceed to the thesis stage of the DBA. The requirements are detailed in the DBA programme handbook

The administration of the DBA taught modules is currently managed by the PGR Administration Team. If you have any queries, please contact aston_online@aston.ac.uk.

Engineering & Physical Sciences (EPS)

EPS Core Research Skills Module

All first-year Engineering and Physical Sciences (EPS) postgraduate researchers (PGRs) complete a mandatory Research Skills module. The module aims to provide new postgraduate researchers with a fundamental and general introduction into the necessary skills for conducting research and covers sessions on project managing research, conducting literature reviews, delivering impactful presentations, working in research teams and disseminating research outcomes. The module also gives new EPS PGRs an opportunity to network with researchers from different departments and become part of Aston's wider research community. In addition to the mandatory

sessions, optional sessions are also delivered and more detailed information about the module is available upon enrolment.

Health & Life Sciences (HLS)

HLS Professional Development Module

All first-year Health and Life Sciences (HLS) postgraduate researchers (PGRs) complete a mandatory Professional Development Module. The module aims to provide new postgraduate researchers with a fundamental and general introduction into the necessary skills for conducting research and covers sessions on project managing research, conducting literature reviews, delivering impactful presentations, working in interdisciplinary research teams, health and safety, preparing for qualifying report and viva, writing abstract and disseminating research outcomes. The module also gives new HLS PGRs an opportunity to network with researchers from other departments and become part of Aston's wider research community. In addition to the mandatory sessions, optional sessions are also delivered and more detailed information about the module is available upon enrolment.

*ALL postgraduate researchers are required to attend these sessions unless an exemption/partial exemption¹ has been specified within the Learning Agreement. So please remember **NOT** to commit to any other activities during these times.*

Students on other doctoral programmes usually complete taught modules during an earlier stage of their programme.

6.6 Teaching and Learning Skills Training

Training for PGRs who wish to undertake teaching is delivered by the Education Team. [The Introduction to Learning & Teaching Practice \(ILTP\)](#) is mandatory for any PGRs who wish to teach. You can find out more information about all the available modules [here](#).

6.7 Research Student Development Fund

PGR students who are wholly or partially self-funded and not in receipt of any other type of student development funding such as a research training support grant or bench fees can apply for the Research Student Development Fund (SDF). The fund is £500 per annum or £1500 in total, available to doctoral students for conference attendance or other development opportunities.

Students who are in receipt of a School funded studentship may also be eligible if the studentship does not contain funding for research training support.

Students who are in receipt of a UKRI Research Training Support Grant (RTSG) or any other internally or externally funded studentship which includes funding for conferences, training and research support, or where a bench fee is required, are not eligible for the SDF.

In order to apply for the SDF eligible students must have passed their Qualifying Report and must not be on Leave of Absence or in their extension year. Students must also be up to date with annual reports and supervisory meeting records to be eligible for funding.

The SDF is primarily intended to support a student attending a conference where they will be presenting a paper but may also be used for other development opportunities such as conference attendance and training courses. Applications will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the relevant Director of Research Degree Programmes and students and supervisors will need to provide a supporting case where the request is for an activity other than a prestigious or recognised conference at which the student is presenting. Allowable expenses include registration fees, accommodation, travel and subsistence and other associated costs such as visa fees.

Guidance and application form can be found on the Blackboard [Aston Graduate School: Postgraduate Research Students - Researcher Development](#) course.

Please do not book a place at a conference or training course or make any travel arrangements until your application has been approved as we may not be able to re-imburse expenses and will not consider applications retrospectively.

If the conference or training involves travel overseas you must comply with the [International Travel Procedure for PGR Students](#) (see [Section 3.11](#)).

7. Thesis Submission and Examination

This is the culmination of your research degree. This section provides some of the key information in relation to thesis submission and what happens after this. Detailed guidance will be provided by the PGR Progression Team when you reach this stage of your research degree.

7.1 Submitting Your Thesis/Portfolio for Examination

The [General Regulations for the Presentation of Theses](#) contain detailed information about the format your thesis should take, including the order of contents and the permitted length. The [General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis](#) detail the requirements for the submission of the thesis.

You are required to submit an electronic copy of your thesis for examination, saved as a single protected file. This copy of the thesis will be made available to the Examiners **only** by the [PGR Progression Team](#). It should not be forwarded directly to the examining team.

Your thesis and thesis abstract should be submitted to the [PGR Progression Team](#) by the thesis submission date. Information about the thesis abstract is provided in Regulation 3.3.1 of the General Regulations for the Presentation of Theses.

At the time of submission, you will be required to upload the electronic copy of your Thesis to Turnitin, the University's Text-Matching Software (General Regulations for the Presentation of Theses, Regulation 4.1.4).

You will be sent specific guidance on how to upload your submission to Turnitin in advance of your submission date. Please ensure that you follow the process to the end and receive confirmation that your upload has been successful.

To ensure data protection, your upload to Turnitin will not be stored on either the Turnitin or University Servers. You are, therefore, required to submit a separate electronic copy of your Thesis. The submission to Turnitin does **not** replace your electronic submission.

The report generated by Turnitin may be made available to your Examining Team, Supervisor or Director of Research Degree Programmes who may discuss any concerns raised by the report with you.

7.2 Late Submission

Please note that if you do not submit the thesis by the due date, the PGR team will contact you to let you know that you will be automatically withdrawn within 14 days. It is imperative that you apply for an extension well in advance of your submission date if you are not likely to be able to submit on time (see [section 3.7](#) regarding the extension procedure).

7.3 Appointment of Examiners

As your submission deadline draws near, your Supervisor will nominate an Internal and an External Examiner for the assessment of your thesis and to conduct your *viva voce* examination, unless you are, or have recently been, a member of staff in which

case both Examiners will be external to the University (see Regulation 16.4 of the [General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis](#) for more information).

The criteria for the appointment of Examiners are detailed in the [General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis](#). Once the appointment of the Examiners has been approved by the Associate Dean Research and on behalf of the University Senate, your Supervisor will arrange your viva. Regulation 17 of the [General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis](#) those persons who must attend the *viva voce* examination; your Supervisor may attend if you are happy for them to do so.

The viva will be chaired by an Independent Chair who is not involved with the examining process but has responsibility for ensuring the viva is conducted in line with Aston Regulations.

7.4 Viva Arrangements

Your supervisor should make arrangements for the viva as soon as the appointment of examiners has been confirmed. The viva should normally take place within 3 months of submission. If you are on a Tier 4/Student Visa and your visa is due to expire before your viva you will need to discuss with the visa compliance team so that an extension can be arranged well in advance.

The viva will normally be held in person at Aston. In certain circumstances, the viva may be held online with the prior agreement of all parties concerned.

7.5 Viva Examination

During your *viva*, you will be questioned about your research. This may include your literature review, choice of methodology, data collection, analysis and interpretation and any other topics your examiners deem relevant. Such examinations vary in duration but can often last about three hours. More detailed information about the Conduct of the *Viva Voce* examination is provided in Appendix C of the Code of Practice for Research Degrees. There is a Graduate School Training Programme course on preparing for your *viva* (see [section 6.1](#)) and 'The Good Viva' video is accessible from the Blackboard course [Aston Graduate School: Postgraduate Research Students - Researcher Development](#).

7.6 Viva Outcomes

Following the *viva voce* examination, the Examiners will make one of the recommendations in Regulation 19.1, 19.2 or 19.3 of the [General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis](#), according to the degree submitted for. If the Examiners are unable to agree to upon a recommendation an External Referee Examiner will be appointed (Regulation 16.3). The outcome will be formally communicated to you by the [PGR Progression Team](#) on receipt of the Examiners' report.

Examiners may recommend an award subject to revisions being made. Information on the Completion of Revisions is provided in Regulation 20.

Examiners may recommend that a thesis be revised and resubmitted for re-examination.

Further information on resubmission and re-examination of a revised thesis is provided in Regulations 21 and 22 of the [General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis](#); Regulation 23 details the possible outcomes of a thesis resubmitted for re-examination.

Examiners may, in rare circumstances, recommend a lower award of MPhil either subject to correction or no corrections or subject to re-submission and re-examination.

In even rarer circumstances, examiners may recommend no award.

If you are required to submit a revised thesis for re-examination, you will be invoiced for a resubmission fee (usually at the time you resubmit your thesis).

7.7 Submission of Corrections/Re-submission of Thesis

The viva outcome together with a list of corrections, if required, will be communicated formally to you by the [PGR Progression Team](#) on receipt of the Joint Examiners Report. The team will also communicate the deadline for submission of the revised thesis if applicable. You must submit the revised thesis directly to the Internal Examiner and, if required, the External Examiner and the PGR Progression Team. The PGR Progression Team will then liaise with the Examiner(s) and let you know the outcome.

7.8 Final Thesis Submission

Once any revisions have been approved, the [PGR Progression Team](#) will write to you with the guidance on how to submit the final version of your thesis in line with Regulation 4.2 of the General Regulations for the Presentation of Theses.

8. University Support Services for All Students

As well as Aston Graduate School and your College, there is a range of support available for all students which PGRs can access.

8.1 Student Services at The Hub

The Hub is the gateway to many support services that you may need to access during your studies. The team can answer general questions about your studies and student experience, provide information about service drop-in times and help you to access specialist services such as student advice, international advice and the finance team.

We can also help you to access student welfare services which include, counselling, mental health and wellbeing support and the disability and academic support service.

The Hub is located on the upper ground floor of the main building. See [The Hub Webpage](#) for more details. You can contact the team on 0121 204 4007 or email thehub@aston.ac.uk

8.2 Library Services

Your Library

A warm welcome from all of us in the Library team. We look forward to meeting you during your time at Aston. We are committed to providing: excellent service, access to a wide range of resources and study spaces to suit your need. Whether you are on campus or further afield you'll find members of the team on hand to offer help and support.

Membership and access

Once you join Aston you automatically become a member of the Library. Your uniCARD is your Library card and you will need it to enter the Library and borrow items. The barcode on your uniCARD is your Library membership number.

You can keep an eye on your Library account by regularly accessing your account online <https://astonuniversity.account.worldcat.org/account/checkouts> and regularly checking your **Aston email**. We will contact you by email if a book you have borrowed has been recalled (there are fines on recalled items).

If you are a part-time or distance learning student or have a disability or additional need, you can ask us to post books out to you.

If you would like to use other UK University libraries, you will need to complete a SCONUL application form at <http://www.sconul.ac.uk/sconul-access>.

Library building and study spaces

We have flexible opening hours, which are always displayed in the foyer and on the website. [Library Opening Hours - Aston University](#).

We have a wide range of study spaces so whether you need a space for quiet, silent or collaborative study you will find the space that works for you. You will also find additional study spaces in the Main Building. There is a postgraduate study room on the third floor of the Library towards the rear staircase.

Online library

Your Library has an extensive range of resources, including books, ebooks, journals and databases to support and enhance your research.

From the Library home page <http://www.aston.ac.uk/library/> you can:

- link to Library Search to look for books, journals and e-resources;
- find out about Library services and facilities;
- support for PG Research

You will find our databases on the A-Z Databases list

<http://libguides.aston.ac.uk/az.php>

Training, help and support

Our Information Specialists provide a programme of workshops as part of the Graduate School Training Programme to help you make the most of our resources. In addition, there are tailored 'Research Bites', look out for the programme on the [Research Bites - LibGuides](#).

Further information can be found on the [Research Support – Libguide](#) and in the Blackboard [Aston Graduate School: Postgraduate Research Students - Researcher Development](#) course under Library Resources.

If you have any questions you can speak to a member of the team: in person, via LiveChat or by calling 0121 204 4525. You can also post questions via AsktheLibrary <http://libanswers.aston.ac.uk/> or email library@aston.ac.uk.

Open Access publishing

Open Access (OA) publishing is all about sharing research freely and openly to all readers online. UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the European Commission now mandate for OA publication of journal articles and conference papers. OA publishing also means your research gains wider visibility and usage. See our [OA webpages](#) for more detail and for specific questions about OA please contact openaccess@aston.ac.uk.

ORCiD

ORCiD is a free, persistent identifier for researchers that ensures accurate credit and citation is possible, regardless of name changes, name duplications, or different publishing formats. The ORCiD is owned and controlled by the researcher, meaning that you have the power to update it as you work and can take it with you throughout your career – you only need to register once! All Aston researchers should register for an ORCiD as this can be linked in our research portfolio, Aston Research Explorer, and used to identify you on manuscript submissions, grant applications, patent applications, and more. Please speak to your Library Information Specialist or the Open Research team if you would like to know more.

Regulations

The [Library regulations](#) can be found on the [Library website](#) (see Conditions of Use).

Contact details:

Email: library@aston.ac.uk

Telephone: 0121 204 4525

FAQs and Live Chat: <https://libanswers.aston.ac.uk/>

8.3 Digital Services

Aston University has extensive Digital facilities with over 1,500 desktop computers specifically for student use, offering a range of networked software packages, database systems, modelling tools and computer-aided learning materials. We have

also created WiFi Study Spaces around the campus that are open to students all the time. For students studying remotely we have a range of support available, including a Virtual Desktop Environment (VDI) providing access to a campus-based computers and the installed software which can be run on any personal device. For details and support on this please check the Solve portal <https://solve.aston.ac.uk> and search for 'vdi'.

To help you make the most of the IT facilities, we have created several guides and solutions which contains information on all the services provided including email, Printing and much more. You can view the guides on the Solve Portal <https://solve.aston.ac.uk>

WiFi is available across the campus and is called *_Aston Connect*. It is really simple to use - Just connect your phone, tablet or notebook and enter your computer login details when requested.

[The Digital Services Helpdesk](#) on the ground floor of Main Building is available from 8am to 6pm during term time and can help with any issue relating to your digital services or the operation of your uniCARD for building access.

Contact digital_helpdesk@aston.ac.uk or 0121 204 3445

8.4 Careers and Placements

Whether you are undertaking your postgraduate research degree to facilitate your career in academia, or considering alternative options after you have completed your research, Careers and Placements at Aston University is here to help you consider your options and successfully navigate the labour market.

We offer individual advice and guidance appointments face-to-face, online and by phone. You can book an appointment with an Aston University careers consultant at any time as a research student at Aston, and for up to three years after completion. Careers appointments can be used to help you explore options after your research studies, identify potential employers and opportunities, develop your application skills, and prepare for interviews and assessment centres.

Career development workshops are also run as part of the Graduate School Training Programme, and you can find careers resources for postgraduate researchers in the 'Career Development' area of the Blackboard course Aston Graduate School: Postgraduate Research Students - Researcher Development and on the [Careers and Placements website](#).

To book an appointment with a Careers Consultant, please check the appointments section of [Aston Futures](#).

Alternatively, you can email careers@aston.ac.uk or Merlinda Charlery directly on m.charlery@aston.ac.uk for help booking an appointment.

8.5 Learning Development Centre

The Learning Development Centre (LDC) provides academic and pastoral support for students throughout their studies at Aston through a range of activities, including one-to-one appointments, taught sessions and peer mentoring schemes.

The LDC offers one-to-one, group tutorials, workshops and webinars to help students develop their academic, maths and statistics skills. Our team delivers a series of workshops and webinars covering several topics, including academic writing, understanding referencing, mathematics and statistics.

Online and campus-based academic support and resources:

All of the LDC services are available on campus and online through Teams, email or Blackboard.

Appointments can be arranged outside of regular working hours if required.

The LDC has a series of resources on the Learning Development Centre and Get Ahead Blackboard modules to help refresh your study and maths skills including referencing resources and GCSE mathematics knowledge. These include study guides, written notes, videos and practice questions. We also have over 300 videos on our YouTube channel with explanations and example questions:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8NFLP4VtC3daV3PEwChs9Q>

Postgraduate Mentoring Scheme

The transition to postgraduate study is exciting but can be daunting. Having the support of an experienced postgraduate student mentor can help you to settle in and make the most of your time at Aston. This support is primarily pastoral and includes practical advice to help you to integrate into the University as a postgraduate research student. Mentoring is available in your first year and focuses on support such as:

- Settling into University and the postgraduate student community, whether you are based on campus or at a distance
- Getting to grips with University processes with lots of practical advice and support
- Dealing with the 'culture shock' of a new environment and learning about local amenities
- Achieving a good life/study balance and increasing social and academic confidence
- Sharing another postgraduate student's experience, knowledge and skills whilst developing your own

Postgraduate Mentors are NOT supervisors; they are an additional resource to support you through your studies. They offer you a student's perspective, having been in your shoes not so long ago!

If you are a current postgraduate student, why not apply to become a Postgraduate Mentor?

- Improve your employability, communication and personal skills whilst enhancing your CV
- Develop your leadership and management qualities
- Increase your confidence and motivation
- Contribute to the postgraduate student community

If you are interested in postgraduate mentoring, please contact:

Email: mentoring@aston.ac.uk

For more information about using the Learning Development Centre, please visit our [website](#), the Learning Development Centre blackboard module and social media:

Instagram: @astonldc

Twitter: @astonldc

Booking information:

Please contact the Learning Development Centre to book an appointment with one of our advisors.

Contact details:

Email: ldc@aston.ac.uk

Telephone: 0121 204 3040

Website: <https://www2.aston.ac.uk/current-students/academic-support/ldc>

Location:

The Learning Development Centre is located on the first floor of the Library building.

Opening Hours

10am-4pm Monday to Friday, term-time

Limited availability out of term

8.6 Student Welfare Services

See sections 1.7 and 1.8 for more information on the range of services to support [student welfare](#).

8.7 Centre for English Language and Communication at Aston (CELCA)

CELCA specialises in English language use and effective communication in academic, professional and intercultural contexts. CELCA tutors can help students build their confidence, improve accuracy and fluency when using spoken and written English, pronunciation, writing for academic and professional purposes, giving presentations, and other skills such as seminar discussions or listening to lectures. The support is mainly aimed at international students; however, UK students are also welcome. Please note that CELCA provides instruction, guidance and support but does not offer a proofreading service.

One-to-one tutorials are available throughout the year, online and on-campus, and can be booked via <https://www.aston.ac.uk/education/english/academic-english-tutorials>.

Webinars and self-access resources are available on Blackboard by searching for the Centre for English Language and Communication in Courses.

For more information visit [CELCA webpages](#) or email celca@aston.ac.uk.

8.8 Aston Students' Union

For many students, life at Aston revolves around the Students' Union (SU), the go-to place for making the most of your time here, helping you to have the best experience possible at University.

The SU offers loads of services including:

- Sports Clubs & Societies
- Opportunities to represent your peers within the University, locally and nationally
- Student Advice
- The Lounge Bar, The SU Shop and entertainment
- A space to socialise and study
- Prayer Facilities
- Accommodation advice and support (Aston Student Homes)
- Affordable student accommodation (The Green)
- Facilities for commuter students

Find out more on the [Aston SU website](#)

Contacts:

Atul Rana -Student Union President: president@union.aston.ac.uk

Kirsty Allan - Vice President Welfare: vp.welfare@union.aston.ac.uk

Juan Carlos Garcia Belza -Vice President Student Activities:
vp.studentactivities@union.aston.ac.uk

Adora Wong -Vice President Education: vp.education@aston.ac.uk

Taher Gadiwala – Vice President Communities vp.communities@union.aston.ac.uk

Welcome Desk 0121 204 4855 or su.reception@aston.ac.uk

Aston Student Voice

The Students' Union is a charity aiming to promote Aston students' rights and interests. Alongside the elected Student Officers, the Student Activities and Voice team is here to support the Student Voice:

- Promoting the Union's democratic processes, ensuring that the Union remains student-led;
- Supporting elected officers in delivering on their goals and projects;
- Recruiting and developing the skills of Student Reps, to give you the tools to have a say on how your University is run;
- Delivering campaigns to promote student interests and wellbeing.

Your views and feedback on your course and the University are important; they can help the University enhance the quality of the student experience and make positive change. There are a variety of opportunities for you to provide feedback on your

course from module evaluations to national surveys that seek to gauge your opinions.

The SU supports the Student Reps to represent your academic interests to the University and the SU. You can volunteer to be a Student Rep from the start of the academic year. There are no limits to who can be a Student Rep – all you need is a desire to improve the lives of others and the willingness to learn and develop in the role!

If you would like to find out more about the role of Student Reps or how the SU is representing your academic interests, then you can email your Vice President (Education) (vp.education@union.aston.ac.uk). You can also find out more by visiting the [Aston SU website](#).

We also hold termly Student Union Council meetings so you can feedback to us about how you think we are best representing you! You can learn more about what we do and why too.

For more information email union.voice@aston.ac.uk or see the [Aston SU website](#)

Clubs and Societies

The Student Activities and Voice team offers lots of fantastic opportunities for students to get involved and make the most of your time at Aston. You can make new friends and find ways to boost your CV, learn a new skill, continue a hobby, or learn something completely new.

Our Clubs and Societies are student-led, meaning they are run by students, for students (with some help from the Student Activities team along the way too). We have over 100 Clubs and Societies to choose from; if you don't see something for you, why not start your own? For more information and to see a full list of our student groups please visit <https://www.astonsu.com/activities/clubsandsocieties/>.

For more information email student.activities@aston.ac.uk or see the [Aston SU website](#).

Bar and Lounge

Our team welcomes you and invites you to spend time with us enjoying the best quality food and drink on campus.

We have a new mouthwatering food menu and a range of drinks from cocktails and mocktails to beers and ciders. We're open seven days a week on the first floor of the Students' Union. If you're looking for entertainment, we're showing all major sporting events on Sky and BT Sports, we have Pool Tables, card and board games, retro consoles, and music, all week around.

You can find more information about what we serve and what we have going on at www.astonlounge.com

SU Shop

The Aston Union Shop, on the Ground Floor of the SU, is dedicated to Aston students and their day-to-day life on the University campus. Whether you need good value stationery, a cosy warm hoodie for cold nights or a quick bite to eat and drink in between lectures or touch points, we are here for you!

The Aston Union Shop sells a wide variety of essential items, including confectionery, stationery, greeting cards, clothing, branded gifts and much more. It also stocks tools for your studies such as lab books, lab coats, safety spectacles, USB sticks and batteries, as well as medications, toiletries, and other useful household products.

This is absolutely the go-to place for Aston University branded clothing, stationery and all things Aston University branded.

You can also browse our shop [online](#).

The Green - Student Accommodation & Community

The Green is an affordable student accommodation managed by your Students' Union with all-inclusive prices for 2023/24 starting from just £74.50 a week! Just a short 15-minute walk from Aston University campus, The Green is not just accommodation, it is a Community of Aston students managed by the Students' Union.

The SU has an office based on site at The Green. All of the accommodation is suitably furnished for students with space for socialising or studying. The communal areas of the properties are cleaned periodically by the on-site Housekeeper and there is a Handyperson to carry out day to day repairs. Senior Students who live on site act as Resident Wardens to provide support to the community. There is an onsite pay-as-you-go laundrette and some free laundrette tokens are provided each month. There is FREE high-speed Wi-Fi network (for up to eight devices) and the accommodation is monitored by CCTV with good lighting.

There is **FREE** on-street parking available to all residents and student residents have their own front door and post box which our student residents tell us they really value.

The Green is a vibrant and close-knit community like no other. Learn more [here](#).

SU Student Advice

Student Advice offers advice on a wide range of issues, study related or personal, and can refer you to specialist services if necessary. The advice team offers free, independent, and confidential advice with a focus on empowering you to make your own decisions. The advisers can provide support and representation at hearings and meetings with Aston University.

Our advice is:

- **Professional**
The advice team is experienced and trained in advice.
- **Free**
There is no charge for advice, support and representation.
- **Independent**
Aston Students' Union is independent from Aston University. We are a charity and company led by elected students.
- **Non-judgmental**
Our advice team aims to treat everyone with respect and courtesy. We offer a friendly and welcoming environment for all students.
- **Confidential**

Our advice team will not pass on any information that students share with us to anyone outside the service without permission. This includes Aston University.

SU Student Advice offers advice and support in a range of subject areas including:

- **Academic**
Advisers provide advice and support in relation to exceptional circumstance claims, course issues, leave of absence, examination boards, academic appeals, academic misconduct, disciplinary action, fitness to practise and complaints about the University. Advisers are able to accompany and represent students at University meetings.
- **Money**
Advisers provide money and budgeting advice. This includes advice on tuition fee issues and income maximisation including grants, bursaries, and applications to hardship funds. The service provides basic debt advice such as self-negotiation and dealing with creditors.
- **Housing/accommodation**
The advice team offers advice on housing rights and responsibilities. Advisers offer a Tenancy Agreement checking service, advice on disrepair, tenancy deposits, disputes with landlords and eviction.
- **Employment rights**
The advice team advises on employment rights issues including pay rights, time off, equality at work, disciplinary and grievance processes, and termination of employment.
- **Consumer**
The advice team advises on consumer issues such as the return or replacement of goods and issues with utility bills.
- **More**
The advice team can also signpost students to other specialist services e.g., sexual health, alcohol, and substance abuse.

Hate Crime Reporting

SU Advice is recognised by West Midlands Police as a third-party hate crime reporting centre.

Contact SU Advice

Ground floor, Aston Students' Union
0121 204 4848
advice@aston.ac.uk

Our Core Opening Hours are Monday to Friday 10.00 am to 4.00 pm

'Drop in' Sessions take place Monday to Friday 10:00 am to 12.00.

8.9 Aston Student Homes

Aston Student Homes is the official accommodation support service for Aston University students. We are here to support you throughout your accommodation journey. We can help you with your accommodation search and if needed refer you

to an Adviser for housing rights advice. All properties advertised by us have gas, electric, EPC and HMO licences (if applicable) and comply with our property standards.

If you have any queries, please don't hesitate to contact us: astonstudenthomes@aston.ac.uk or visit our website <https://www.astonsu.com/housing/astonstudenthomes/>

Be sure to follow Aston Students' Union on social media to see what events we have planned for you throughout the year! You can find us on [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#), [TikTok](#) and [Facebook](#).

8.10 The Chaplaincy Team

The Chaplaincy team is based in the **Martin Luther King Multi-faith Centre** at the heart of campus, providing a quiet place to drop in if you need someone to talk to, or if you are looking for some support. The Chaplaincy welcomes people of all faiths and none and can provide wellbeing support and guidance. See [The Chaplaincy Webpage](#) for more details or contact chaplaincy@aston.ac.uk or 0121 204 4729.

8.11 Health & Safety Essential Information

All new postgraduate researchers are directed to follow the College's local arrangements provided at induction and, where appropriate, a College-wide talk on any Health and Safety Issues that takes place.

Health and Safety Mandatory Induction Training Courses

The general University Health and Safety induction material can be found within the University's Health and Safety Awareness and the Fire Safety Awareness e-learning training courses found on Blackboard

These courses are mandatory and should be done within a few weeks of joining the University. The links can be found within the staff portal on Core, under Training; postgraduate researchers have access to the Training area of the staff portal. Local fire safety information should be provided during local induction in your College. Further information can be obtained from the local College/Professional Health and Safety Coordinator.

First Aid and Accidents

Colleges and Professional Support Areas

Each of the Schools and Professional Support Services have their own trained first aiders who are available to provide assistance if required. The first aider should have been made known to you at your local Health & Safety induction. If you have an accident, feel unwell or need first aid during office hours (Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm), contact your local First Aid Officer for assistance in the first instance. You can also call Campus Safety on 222 from any internal phone or 0121 359 2922 from a mobile, or via the [Safezone Mobile App](#).

Campus Safety Deployment

If the person is not mobile, if movement could worsen the condition or if they are unconscious, contact Campus Safety immediately on emergency extension 222 (internal) or 0121 359 2922 (external, including from a mobile and from Aston

Student Village) or using the [Safezone Mobile App](#) (24/7) which goes straight to the Campus Safety control room. Notify Campus Safety of the location of the ill/injured person, the nature of the illness/injury, and the extension number of the nearest internal telephone. The Campus Safety team will provide first aid assistance and contact the ambulance service for you, if required.

First aid cover during out of hours working

When work or study is taking place outside normal office hours, first aid cover will be reduced or absent. Campus Safety are in operation 24/7 and can be called upon in an emergency, including by using the [Safezone Mobile App](#) which goes straight to the Campus Safety control room. All Team members are first aid trained and in constant radio contact with the Campus Safety control room, through which all emergency calls are channelled.

All accidents must be reported via a form which can be downloaded from the [Health and Safety webpages](#).

Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs)

Currently the University has AED units located in the following areas:

1. Aston Students' Union – Inside Lobby/Entrance area
2. Conference Aston – Main Reception Area
3. Library – Main Reception Desk Ground floor
4. Main Building – Adjacent to Main Reception Desk
5. Main Building – MB625 Life and Health Sciences
6. Sir Doug Ellis / Woodcock Sports Centre - Reception
7. Walsall Recreation Centre – Reception

Dental Practice

There is a dental practice in the Vision Sciences Building, Henderson Dental Practice, telephone 0121 204 4310.

Campus Safety and Working Out of Hours

The Campus Safety Officers are based in the Main Building Reception area. They can be contacted on extension 4803 (the emergency extension is 222 (internal) or 0121 359 2922 (external, including from a mobile and Aston Student Village)).

You are encouraged to work within the normal University day (8.00am-6.00pm). If, however, you need to work out of hours in the Main Building, you should use your uniCARD to gain access via the 'Out of Normal Hours' Entrance – this is off Potter Street. The times when your uniCARD will have to be used to gain entry will be as follows:

Monday-Friday 8pm-6am

At the weekend, please use the out of hours entrance and exit at the South Wing.

There will be other times that the Building will be closed (Bank Holidays, etc.) and these will be notified in advance. All University users are required to have their uniCARD at all times.

Working Alone

Postgraduate researchers may undertake office or laboratory computer work alone provided they follow the University College/Support Area local arrangements for Lone Working. Postgraduate researchers must not work alone on any procedures involving risk of harm. If in doubt, check with your Supervisor. The use of [Safezone Mobile App](#) is recommended when lone working

Fire and Safety Awareness Course

The [Fire Awareness Course](#) is mandatory and should be completed via Blackboard.

Fire Alarm and Fire Alarm Testing

Every Thursday in the Main Building, the fire alarm is tested four times between the hours of 0830-0900. These tests should last no longer than 15 seconds. Should the alarm continue for longer than 15 seconds you should follow the evacuation procedure, as shown in the Fire Safety Video above.

For all other buildings you must contact the reception staff for that building to confirm when the test is undertaken.

If you have any queries or concerns, please contact the Health and Safety Unit by email: safety@aston.ac.uk.

Emergency and Fire Evacuation Procedure

The Main Building and Wings operate a two-stage fire alarm system. Should the alarm sound intermittently (and in certain areas be accompanied by voice instructions) this means a fire has been detected in the building and you should prepare to evacuate. If the alarm sounds continuously (and in certain areas be accompanied by voice instructions) you must leave the building by the nearest available exit and proceed to the assembly point.

Designated Fire/Emergency Assembly Points

- Main Building & North and South Wings – **car park 12 (covered car park underneath the football pitch)**
- Vision Sciences, Aston Day Hospital, Library, Aston Students' Union, Woodcock Sports Centre, EBRI and all Residences Buildings – **Fountain Area in front of the Main Building**
- Conference Aston (Aston Business School) – **'amphitheatre' adjacent to Aston Students' Union**

Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPS)

A PEEP is an agreed evacuation plan which contains all required information to ensure safe egress from a building by an individual requiring assistance to leave the building in an emergency.

If you have special needs, or may find it difficult to evacuate the building in an emergency, you should complete a PEEP Self-Assessment form on arrival at the University obtained by email to safety@aston.ac.uk.

Upon completion, your PEEP document will be reviewed by the Fire Safety Advisor, who will contact you either to confirm your PEEP arrangements or to discuss your PEEP needs.

For more information on Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans please contact the Health and Safety Unit by email: safety@aston.ac.uk.

Smoking

Please be aware that smoking or vaping is NOT permitted anywhere inside or within five metres of an opening of any University Building.

Recharging of Personal Electrical Equipment

The University requires that any personal device, e.g. mobile phone charger, PDA, must be safety tested before being plugged in. In addition, portable electrical equipment must be visually inspected prior to use and defective equipment must be withdrawn from use immediately.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Health and Safety Unit, by emailing: safety@aston.ac.uk