

PGR LEAVE SUPPORT POLICY

Version No.	Description	Author	Approval	Effective Date
1.0	A policy confirming the provision of PGR Leave Support	Strathclyde Doctoral School	18 th November 2020	From AY 2020-21
1.1	Amendments to Carers Leave and Addition of Compassionate Leave to Policy	Strathclyde Doctoral School	17 th November 2021	From AY 2021-22
1.2	Amendments to Compassionate Leave to create Discretionary Leave provision	Strathclyde Doctoral School		



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POLICY STATEMENT

1. The University of Strathclyde is committed to promoting a positive attitude to work-life balance and has a range of benefits policies that help staff and students accommodate personal and family commitments. In line with this, the University aims to encourage doctoral research student well-being through the provision of paid leave support to ensure their ongoing academic success.

SCOPE

2. A review of the Postgraduate Researcher (PGR) lifecycle identified disparity in leave provision for doctoral research students across the University. To address this and improve equal opportunity and support for PGRs at the University of Strathclyde, the PGR Leave Support Fund has been established to ensure that all funded doctoral research students are eligible to apply for paid Medical, Maternity, Paternity, Shared Parental, Adoption, or Carers leave **regardless of their source of funding**.

ELIGIBILITY

3. Only doctoral research students are eligible to apply for this Fund.
4. Applicants must be fully registered at the University, and be in receipt of a stipend (maintenance grant) to be eligible to apply.
5. Both full time and part time doctoral research students are eligible to apply. Part time students will be funded on a pro-rata basis, as per their standard stipend payments.
6. UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)¹ funded students are only eligible to apply for Carers Leave and paid Shared Parental Leave through this fund, as funding for periods of Medical, Maternity, Paternity, or Adoption Leave are covered by the UKRI grants through which their studentships are funded.
7. Doctoral research students beyond their funded period and/or registered as 'Writing-up' are not entitled to paid leave through this Fund.
8. Applicants are required to take [voluntary suspension](#) for the associated period of leave.
9. Students should contact their Departmental/School/University administrative contact or supervisor as soon as possible when considering taking [voluntary suspension](#) and applying to this Fund, as it may have an impact on their studentship funding package.
10. All applications must be made prior to any leave being taken. Retrospective applications will not be considered except in cases of medical emergency.

¹ [UK Research and Innovation \(UKRI\)](#) encompasses the 7 research councils: the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), the Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC), the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), and the Medical Research Council (MRC).

11. Doctoral research students in receipt of support from this Fund will receive payments at the same level as their monthly stipend payments during the paid leave period.
12. If a doctoral research student withdraws after or during the period they are receiving support through this Fund, they are not required to repay the funding received.
13. Any overpayments made to a student, due to withdrawal during a period of paid leave, must be repaid to the University.
14. All applications to the Fund will be managed on a case-by-case basis and considered on the basis of the information provided in the dedicated application form.
15. Departments/Schools, Faculties and/or external funders may provide further cover beyond the provision of the Fund for any type of leave. This is entirely at their discretion, should they deem it necessary, and the funds are available to do so.
16. Stipend payments can only be made on a monthly basis. Therefore, where a doctoral research student is granted paid leave under the Fund that starts or ends in the middle of a month, this will be rounded up or down to the nearest month.

MEDICAL LEAVE

17. The Fund can cover stipend payments for absences covered by a medical certificate for up to 3 months within any 12-month period.
18. Periods of medical leave after the initial 3 months can be taken, but no stipend can be provided through the Fund.
19. [Voluntary suspension](#) must be taken for the period of leave to allow fee payments to be suspended and the studentship duration to be extended in line with the period of leave. The student should complete the [Voluntary Suspension Form](#) and submit this to their Supervisor/Departmental/School admin contact who will arrange for the form to be processed within the Department/School and Faculty and sent to Student Business for approval.
20. Medical Leave may be curtailed at any point, but students must inform the Fund managers to ensure stipend payments are managed correctly.
21. An initial shorter period of Medical Leave may be extended, up to a maximum of 3 months paid leave. A new application to the Fund must be submitted, as well as further voluntary suspension applied for.
22. Recipients of the Fund may be required to provide evidence (eg a fit note) to the University that they are fit to return to their doctoral research work prior to being able to return. This would only apply to those on leave due to illness.

MATERNITY/ PATERNITY/ SHARED PARENTAL/ ADOPTION LEAVE

23. Doctoral research students can apply for up to 12 months of Maternity or Shared Parental Leave.
24. The first 6 months of Maternity Leave will be paid at the doctoral research student's standard monthly stipend rate. The following 3 months are paid at a level commensurate with University employee entitlements to [statutory maternity pay](#). The final 3 months are not paid.
25. Adoption Leave will be granted on the same basis as Maternity Leave.

26. Part time students will receive Maternity/Paternity/Shared Parental/Adoption Leave pay on a pro-rata basis through their stipend and if they are working part-

time, may receive a further pro-rata payment from their employer (pending employer's terms and conditions). Part-time students working full-time are not eligible for a stipend and therefore will not be eligible to apply to this fund.

27. Partners, who are doctoral research students, are entitled to up to 2 weeks paid Ordinary Paternity Leave at their standard monthly stipend rate.
28. Parents/partners may be entitled to up to 50 weeks of Shared Parental Leave; this may include paid and unpaid leave, depending on the individual circumstances.
29. There is no qualifying period for Maternity/Paternity/Shared Parental/Adoption Leave.
30. [Voluntary suspension](#) must be taken for the period of Maternity/Shared Parental/Adoption Leave to allow fee payments to be suspended and the studentship duration to be extended. The student should complete the [Voluntary Suspension Form](#) and submit this to their Supervisor/Departmental/School admin contact who will arrange for the form to be processed within the Department/School and Faculty and sent to Student Business for approval. Voluntary suspension is not required for Ordinary Paternity Leave, as stipend payments will continue as standard for this period.
31. Where both parents/partners hold doctoral research studentships at the University, each must submit a separate application. If both parents/partners decide to take leave at the same time, the combined leave taken counts against the overall leave entitlement (e.g. if both parents/partners take 4 weeks leave each simultaneously, it will count as 8 weeks from the overall leave and pay provision).
32. Paternity Leave applicants must provide evidence to the Department that their partner has either returned to work or will be taking Shared Parental Leave.
33. Maternity/Paternity/Shared Parental/Adoption Leave recipients may curtail their leave at any point, but must inform the Fund managers.
34. Maternity Leave applicants must take the [statutory 2 weeks Maternity Leave](#) following the birth of the child.
35. Maternity/ Paternity/ Adoption/Parental leave recipients may increase the period of leave up to the set maximum, but must inform the Fund managers 1 month in advance and also submit a new application if eligible for additional funding through the scheme.

CARERS LEAVE

36. Student carers are encouraged to read the University's [Student Carers Policy](#) for further information on available support at the University.
37. In order to receive support from the Fund, a student must be recognised by the University as a student carer. On receipt of an application for Carers Leave, the Fund managers will contact the Widening Access Team to obtain confirmation that the University is aware of the student's carer status.
38. A definition and evidence of status of a student carer is outlined in the University's [Student Carers Policy](#).
39. The Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdown, for example, has created significant disruption and exceptional circumstances for some doctoral researchers who would not ordinarily fall within the definition of 'student carer'. Students impacted by such exceptional circumstances may submit an application to the Fund for consideration.
40. Applications under the specific exceptional circumstances category must be accompanied by appropriate evidence and demonstrate a significant detriment to the

student's capacity to undertake their studies due to the demands of caring for dependants.

41. The Fund can cover stipend payments for absences of up to 3 months within any 12-month period.
42. [Voluntary suspension](#) must be taken for the period of leave to allow fee payments to be suspended and the studentship duration to be extended in line with the period of leave. The student should complete the [Voluntary Suspension Form](#) and submit this to their Supervisor/Departmental/School admin contact who will arrange for the form to be processed within the Department/School and Faculty and sent to Student Business for approval.
43. Part time students will be funded on a pro-rata basis, as per their standard stipend payments.
44. There is no qualifying period for Carers Leave.
45. Applications will be dealt with on a case by case basis, including any documentation required to confirm the leave requirement.

DISCRETIONARY LEAVE

46. Students are encouraged to explore the [Disability and Wellbeing Service](#) for further information on available support at the University.
47. Eligible students can apply to the Fund for up to 3 months paid Discretionary Leave within any 12-month period.
48. Discretionary Leave can be granted for, but is not limited to: the death, serious injury or serious illness of an immediate relative; the student has been a victim of serious crime; the student has experienced miscarriage; the student has witnessed or been involved in a traumatic event; the student is undergoing social transition of gender; the student is disabled and is experiencing non-medical difficulties associated with their disability; the student is experiencing a family breakdown.
49. An immediate relative is defined as a parent, partner, sibling or child.
50. Discretion may be exercised in the event of the death of a close relative not classed as an immediate relative, for instance where the student is residing with a grandparent who has died.
51. [Voluntary suspension](#) must be taken for the period of leave to allow fee payments to be suspended and the studentship duration to be extended in line with the period of leave. The student should complete the [Voluntary Suspension Form](#) and submit this to their Supervisor/Departmental/School admin contact who will arrange for the form to be processed within the Department/School and Faculty and sent to Student Business for approval.
52. Part time students will be funded on a pro-rata basis, as per their standard stipend payments.
53. There is no qualifying period for Discretionary Leave.
54. Applications will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, including any documentation required to confirm the leave requirement.

APPENDIX A – Processes and Procedures

1. Initial Stage

- a. In the first instance, doctoral research students must contact their primary supervisor to discuss any potential leave requirement.
- b. The relevant Departmental/ School PGR Administrator should also be informed about the potential voluntary suspension as soon as possible, to enable them to check for any potential impact on the doctoral research student's funding.
- c. The student is responsible for ensuring that Funders are made aware of any changes to a student's status/end date relating to this policy.

2. Application Stage

- a. The doctoral research student should ensure they have read the PGR Leave Fund Policy document and should address any queries to the [Fund Managers](#).
- b. The doctoral research student must complete and sign the dedicated PGR Leave Fund application form.
- c. The doctoral research student's primary supervisor should sign the application form before it is submitted to the Departmental/ School PGR Administrator.
- d. The doctoral research student must provide evidence to the Department/ School of the leave requirement where appropriate (medical certificates, [MATB1 form](#), etc.). To ensure that personal data is shared with as few members of staff as possible, these documents should not be provided to the Fund Managers. Departments will be required to confirm that they hold these documents. Departments are responsible for gathering and storing personal data in line with the [General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](#).
- e. The student must also complete and submit a [voluntary suspension](#) form for the appropriate period.

3. Review Stage

- a. The Department/ School must ensure applications are fully completed and signed, and submit the form to the [Fund Managers](#).
- b. The Departments/ Schools should keep records of all documentation submitted.
- c. The Fund Managers will process and review all applications.
- d. The Fund Managers will inform the Department/ School of the outcomes of all applications, and ensure up-to-date records are held on all applications.

4. Award Stage

- a. The Department/ School should inform all applicants of the outcome.
- b. The Department/ School must update the PGR Studentship System, inform the Finance Office of any necessary financial changes and process any FMS journals required.
- c. Successful doctoral research applicants to the Fund must update supervisors, Department/ Schools and/or the Fund Managers of any relevant changes to circumstances.
- d. Supervisors and Departments/Schools are expected to provide appropriate support to doctoral research students on return to their studies.