

Policy on Higher Education Provision with Others

Annex 6: Policy for Split-Site PGR Programmes

1. Introduction

This policy defines the requirements for establishing split-site Postgraduate Research (PGR) programmes. It should be read in conjunction with the *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes*, which sets out the University's requirements in relation to all students and the *Policy for Higher Education Provision with Others*. The additional consideration that must be taken into account for split-site PGR programmes are presented below.

2. Definition of a Split-Site PGR Programme

A split-site PGR programme where Bristol is the lead, is defined as a PGR programme that results in a University of Bristol award and involves students being fully registered as University of Bristol students, whilst spending a significant proportion of their research away from the University, at another approved organisation (often overseas).

A split-site PGR award is a single award from one Higher Education Institution in the partnership only. If more than one award is to be granted by the partners or an award is to be issued jointly with another institution, please see the **Policies for Dual and Joint PGR Awards in annexes 4 and 5.**

A split-site PGR programme is different to a Research Degree by Distance Learning whereby the primary means of student supervision is remote, and the student is not reliant on the University of Bristol on-site facilities. A split-site PGR programme will always be jointly supervised in a collaborative structure for its duration, whereas for a Distance Learning PGR programme a co-supervisor at another organisation is not always necessary.

3. Principles

A split-site PGR programme may cover a single student or multiple students over a number of years; this policy applies to both (though the approval process may be different).

Arrangements must be designed to ensure an experience comparable to that of a student based entirely in Bristol.

A nominated Academic Lead at Bristol is responsible for a particular split-site arrangement. For individual student arrangements, this will normally be a member of the supervisory team and for institutional arrangements for multiple students, this will normally be the Global Bristol PhD Programme Manager within the Bristol Doctoral College. The Lead will be the key point of contact for the collaboration.

For split-site PGR programmes, a written agreement is required with the other organisation, which will normally be supported by the University Secretary's Office.

All individual split-site PGR programme arrangements require Faculty level approval. Ongoing collaborative arrangements for more than one student must be approved at University level.

4. Admissions and Registration

Students on a split-site PGR programme and who are intending to achieve an award from Bristol, will hold full registration as University of Bristol students for the duration of their PhD. Students should be granted visitor student status (or equivalent) at the partner organisation (if a Higher Education Institution) for the period that they are located there. Where the other HEI is the lead partner and the award is intended from them, the student will be registered as a visiting PGR student at Bristol.

Attendance and registration requirements will be detailed in the collaboration contract and should be clearly specified as part of the admissions process. The offer letter to students should include information about how the arrangement will operate, including fee and attendance requirements.

5. Location of Study and Attendance

Students studying on a split-site PGR award where Bristol is the lead, are normally required to attend the University for at least 30% of their research degree. The requirement is the same for both full-time and part-time students.

Where Bristol is the lead, students are normally required to make an initial visit to the University of Bristol during student registration to attend induction events, meet the supervisory team and to undertake a skills audit/ attend any essential skills training. Students will normally be required to attend their annual progress review meeting at the end of the first year in Bristol. If for practical reasons face to face interaction is not possible, the Faculty must arrange for induction and/ or APR meetings to take place remotely.

The timing and length of other periods of attendance will be decided by the supervisory team and will be set out in the student's study plan. For international students, an early conversation about visa requirements must be had with the Visa Compliance Team within Professional Services to ensure that any plan is workable.

Students are normally required to attend the oral examination in Bristol.

6. Student Fees and Costs

The following model of fees is suggested, but this should be agreed with the Faculty Finance Team for each arrangement:

- For all students, for the time spent at Bristol: The annual full-time fee for PGR research students will apply. The fee will be charged pro-rata in any one year.
- For Bristol students during the time spent at the partner institution: The annual fee to be paid to the University of Bristol will be at a reduced rate based upon the difference between the fee at the partner and Bristol's fee rates for the academic year. If the partner is not an HEI or not charging a fee, the full tuition fee at Bristol should apply. Where Bristol is not the lead, it is assumed that fees will be due at the partner for the time spent there and an appropriate portion will be due to Bristol for the time spent at Bristol.

Any fee which is payable to Bristol or the partner institution for the provision of supervisory support and the use of facilities during the period(s) of study, would need to be negotiated with the partner institution and set out in the supporting agreement.

7. Supervision

Supervisory arrangements for split-site PGRs must meet the requirements for supervision as set out in the *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes*. Bristol Students registered on a split-site PGR programme will always have a main supervisor at the University of Bristol. The partner organisation will provide a co-supervisor, who will normally be granted honorary academic status at Bristol for the duration of the student's studies. Details of the supervisory arrangements must be set out in the agreement, with particular detail on the period that the student is away from Bristol.

8. Student Support

Bristol students registered on a split-site PGR programme must have remote access to academic and pastoral support when not at Bristol. Students must receive formal induction from Bristol at the start of their degree. Students where Bristol is not the lead and where they are visiting PGR students in Bristol, must be given an appropriate induction to ensure that they are aware of relevant support networks, policies and regulations for their time based at Bristol.

9. Student Representation

Schools must ensure that students studying for split-site PGR programmes have opportunities to engage with Student-Staff Liaison Committees (SSLCs). It may not be possible for split-site PGR students to attend SSLCs in person for the period that they are based elsewhere.

10. Training and Resources

A student studying for a split site PGR programme must have access to appropriate research skills training, which is normally provided by schools and faculties, and to

the University's Personal and Professional Development Programme. As for all research degrees, supervisors and students must regularly review training needs.

11. Research Community

Participating in the research community, including through opportunities to network with their peers, is an important aspect of study for all research students, including those studying a split-site PGR programme. The partner organisation will provide opportunities for the student to engage with the research community whilst based away from Bristol, with online provision and connections to the school's research community being provided by Bristol. Similar arrangements should be made for students of another HEI who are placed in Bristol to have access to the School's research network and community.

12. Progress and review arrangements

The annual progress review must follow the normal process for research students at Bristol. Students studying for a split-site PGR programme may be required to be in attendance at the University for progress reviews, or the process may be conducted online. How annual progress reviews will be organised will be agreed as part of the contract agreement process, and any variation from the agreed approach must be approved by the Faculty PGR Director. AQPO should be consulted as part of any change as a variation agreement to the original contract may be required.

Students of another HEI who are based at Bristol as visiting PGR students do not require an annual progress review from Bristol. (Although the partner HEI will likely have their own process for monitoring progress and may invite the Bristol supervisory team to participate).

13. Assessment and Award

The assessment process for Bristol students, including the submission of the dissertation and the subsequent oral examination, is set out in the *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes*.

Students studying for a split-site PGR award should be informed of the date of the oral examination in good time so that they are able to make appropriate travel, accommodation and any visa arrangements (if required). For international students, this should normally be 12 – 16 weeks in advance.

The oral examination with the candidate and all the examiners normally takes place at the University of Bristol. The *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes* allows for oral examinations to be held elsewhere or for one or all of the attendees to join remotely in circumstances where permission is sought and granted in advance.

14. Contract Types and Approval

The type of contract required for establishing new split site PGR programme arrangements is different depending upon the nature of the collaboration and the partner organisation. The following section distinguishes between the two types of arrangement:

- a formal relationship between the University and a partner organisation that involves a number of students undertaking a PGR Programme on a split site basis every year. This type of arrangement will require an institutional level Framework Agreement to be put in place with the partner organisation, normally to cover a 5-year period. Each individual student will require a Individual Doctoral Agreement (IDA) to be put in place. A template IDA that can be signed off by Faculty will be included for use within the main Framework Agreement.
- an individual student undertaking a split site PGR programme on a one-off basis. This type of arrangement will require an individual split site PGR agreement to be put in place for a single student.

Both arrangements will require strategic approval [Alignment with UoB strategy, reputation, ethical and moral considerations, rationale for partnership, proposed partnership activities, operational and financial considerations] and quality assurance approval [Quality of provision at HEI, alignment with regulations, student support arrangements, other due diligence checks]. Strategic approval will normally come from the University Research Committee (URC) for institutional agreements, while the Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (PGR) will normally provide strategic approval for single student agreements.

In all cases, arrangements must be designed to ensure an experience comparable to that of a student based entirely in Bristol. To ensure this, the approval process will be completed in consultation with Schools and Faculties, relevant Professional Services teams (including but not limited to the Academic Quality and Policy Office, Finance Services and the Visa Compliance Team), and the Academic and Quality Standards Committee (AQSC).

Where Bristol is not the lead partner for split site agreement and the student will be awarded by a different HEI, the partner will need to draw up an appropriate contract agreement. If the other partner is seeking for multiple students to spend time at Bristol, URC will still need to agree to Bristol's collaboration. For an individual student of another HEI to spend time as a visiting student at Bristol as part of a split site agreement, the Faculty PGR Director can provide strategic approval with input from AQPO for related due diligence checks and support in developing the contract.

15. Reviewing provision

Split-site PGR arrangements governed by an Institutional Framework Agreement should be reviewed regularly, at least every five years.

Any changes to an individual student split-site PGR agreement must be approved by the Dean of Faculty or Faculty PGR Director as their nominee. A variation to the contract agreement will likely be needed so contact must be made with the Academic Quality and Policy Office as part of the approval request.