



**QUEEN'S
UNIVERSITY
BELFAST**



**SCHOOL OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES
INSTITUTE FOR GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY**

**POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH
STUDENT HANDBOOK**

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REGISTRATION

All postgraduate research students must be fully registered at all times until they submit the final version of their thesis.

The University's main [Enrolment and Registration](#) (E&R) process is held annually in September. You must renew your registration during each annual E&R process. The only students exempt from this are those who are on a University-approved temporary withdrawal from study (who will complete registration for the new academic year when returning to study).

If you do not complete registration you will receive communication from Student Services and Systems to bring the issue to your attention. If you then fail to complete registration by the deadline specified by Student Services and Systems you will be withdrawn from the University.

The table below shows each common registration status and details key points to note.

Registration status	Points to note
Full-time	Standard registration status. Fees are charged at the appropriate full-time rate.
Part-time	Not available to student visa holders. Fees are charged at the appropriate part-time rate.
Writing-Up	Available for a <u>maximum</u> of twelve months only to students who have completed all research required for their thesis <u>and</u> have been enrolled for the normal period of study for their research degree programme (e.g. three years of full-time PhD study). There is a one-off Writing-Up charge of £360 (2024/25 figure).

	<p>Eligible students who wish to request transfer to Writing-Up status should ask their principal supervisor to complete the School's Change to Writing-Up form.</p> <p>Students on Writing-Up status are not expected to make use of lab facilities, and for insurance reasons should contact the School if they need to use the labs: biosciences-pg@qub.ac.uk</p>
Graduation Only	<p>A student's registration status is changed to Graduation Only by Student Services and Systems when the student submits their thesis for examination.</p> <p>No tuition fees are incurred during registration on Graduation Only status.</p>

TRAINING MODULES

All new research students at the School will be registered on the following School modules:

- BIO8501 SEED: Statistics, Ethics and Experimental Design (runs in Semester One of Year One)
- BIO8502 PLANTS: Planning and Transferable Skills (runs in Semester Two in Year One)
- BIO8503 PGR Training and Development (Hub for training-related materials in the online Canvas system)

International students may also be enrolled on the module BIO8500 Academic Literacy for Biological Sciences Postgraduate Research, which offers timetabled support sessions for non-native English speakers throughout the academic year.

SEED training will provide postgraduate research students within the School of Biological Sciences with fundamental knowledge and skills essential for their research project and career. The course will cover research integrity and ethical considerations when working with humans, animals, and the environment. Experimental design will be discussed in the context of sampling design, of biases and confounding variables, power calculations, and laboratory and technical considerations. The statistics component of the course will cover descriptive and inferential statistics, presentations of results for different audiences, univariate and multivariate statistical tests, and machine learning.

PLANTS training will provide students with an opportunity to audit their existing subject-specific and more general transferable skills and plan how they will strengthen these over the course of their PhD. PLANTS will use the four domains of the [Researcher Development Framework \(RDF\)](#) from Vitae. The course will be delivered through a combination of in-person lectures and student-led group work and will focus on development of academic skills such as presentations (oral and poster) and abstract writing, and transferable skills including networking, teamwork, leadership, and project management.

Timetables for SEED and PLANTS (*and Academic Literacy for Biological Sciences Postgraduate Research*) will be distributed when available.

POSTGRADUATE LEARNING DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT OFFICER

The School also offers other training and development opportunities for research students at times throughout the academic year. Some of these are facilitated by the MHLS Faculty's Postgraduate Learning Development Support Officer, Ms Fabiana Fausto McCracken, who also holds individual consultations with students seeking support and advice around skills and development. You can find a link to book a consultation with Fabiana via her [staff profile page](#).

FEES

Key information on tuition fees for postgraduate research students is available from the [Tuition Fees](#) section of the University website and from the University's [Student Finance Framework](#).



CONSUMABLES ORDERS

An Order Requisition Form which is available from the School Office must be completed when ordering consumables. The form should be signed by the student's supervisor. The form must be completed with the product code and description of the item being requested, project code, the supplier's name and address, and your funding code (if not known, ask the purchasing team via the email address below). A separate form must be completed for each supplier. Completed forms must be emailed to sbs-purchasing@qub.ac.uk

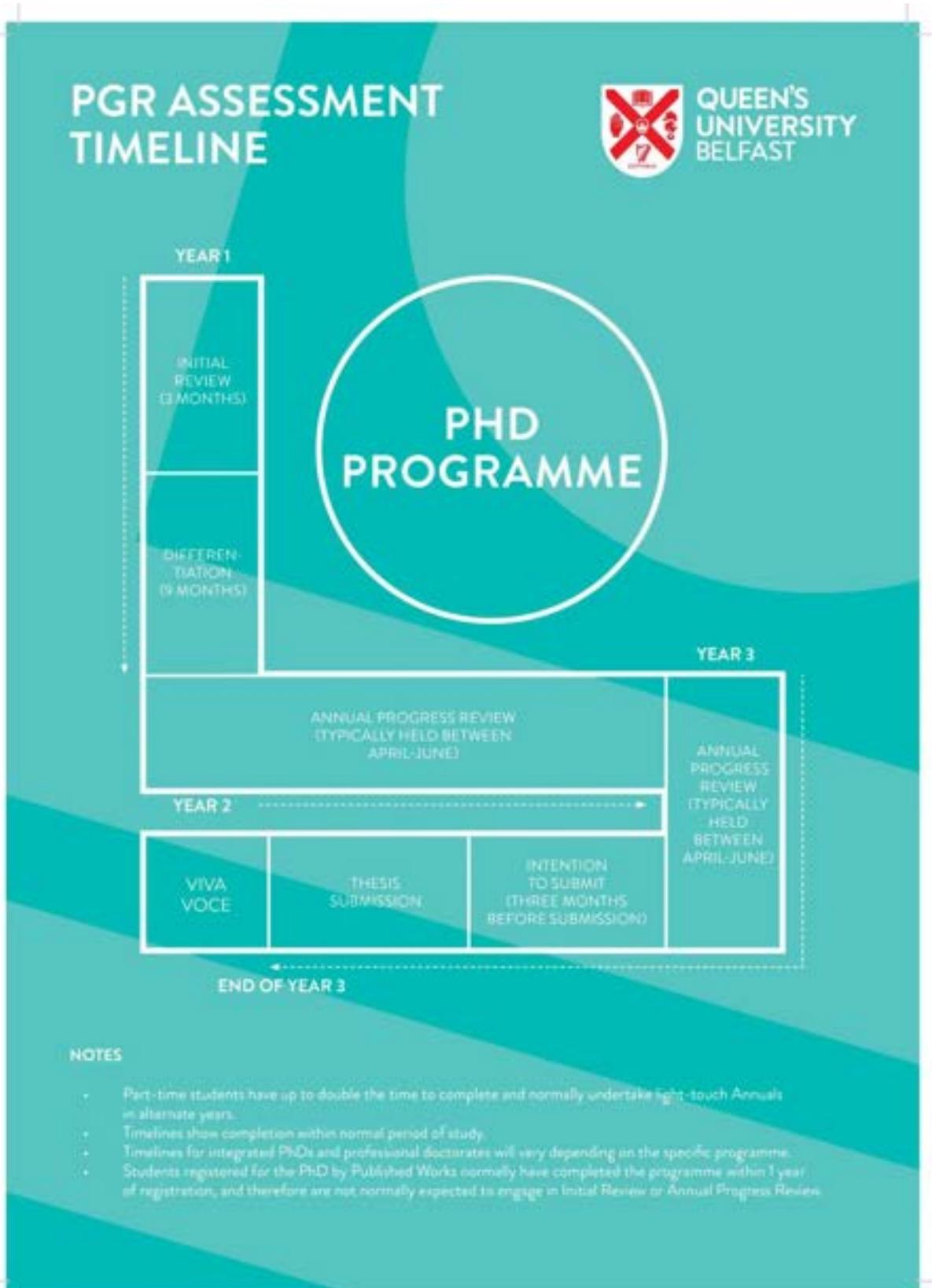
If items are being ordered using purchase card then please use bio-pcard@qub.ac.uk. A link to the webpage would be extremely helpful. Orders are delivered to Stores on the lower-ground floor of the building.



COMMUNICATION TO STUDENTS

Please note that all email communication from Biological Sciences/IGFS and from other parts of the University will always be sent to your Queen's email account. This applies even to students based externally who may have email accounts linked to the external host (e.g. AFBI, Teagasc). **You must therefore ensure that you check your Queen's email regularly so as not to miss important communications.**

STANDARD PHD TIMELINE



PROGRESS MONITORING: INITIAL REVIEW

You will be required to submit the following as part of your initial review report which must be approved by your principal supervisor.

- Project summary (approx. 1,000 words excluding references)
- Research plan (approx. 1,000 words excluding references)
- Literature review (approx. 3,000 words excluding references)

You will submit the report through the School's [Initial Review form](#) along with a Gantt Chart. You will also be required to run a Turnitin originality check on your report and submit the originality check document through the online form. You will be provided with a Class ID and Enrolment Key to access the relevant assignment space in Turnitin. Do not leave your Turnitin submission to the last minute in case you may encounter difficulties when submitting to Turnitin.

Please check that you add the correct email addresses for your two assigned progress monitors when submitting your report or the MS Form submission will fail and they will not receive the report. You can find the email addresses in the Outlook calendar invitation that you will receive for your initial review.

Before the Initial Review Meeting

- Students must undertake initial review at the time scheduled unless a period of withdrawal has been formally requested and approved. In case of last-minute illness please contact biosciences-pg@qub.ac.uk
- Students must ensure that they formally accept the Outlook calendar invitation to the initial review meeting. If the scheduled date and time present any difficulties the student must contact biosciences-pg@qub.ac.uk as soon as possible and no later than two weeks after receiving the calendar invitation.
- Students must submit their initial review report, Turnitin originality report, and Gantt chart via the [Initial Review form](#) at least one week prior to the date of the initial review meeting. This is essential in order to allow progress monitors sufficient time to read and assess the report.
- Please allow adequate time to get to grips with Turnitin and obtain the originality report. Please note you must upload your Turnitin originality report and not the receipt from Turnitin. You will be provided with a Turnitin link by the PGR team. Please contact biosciences-pg@qub.ac.uk if you cannot find your link or you are having issues generating the originality report. Guidance on the use of Turnitin is available from the University's [TurnitinUK Advice for Students](#) page.

The Initial Review Report

- Students are encouraged to read a wide selection of literature reviews in preparation for producing the literature review component of the report. Whilst there are differing approaches to literature review (e.g. systematic, narrative) focus should be on quality rather than length. Figures and tables may be added to the literature review where relevant.
- In their project summary students should home in on their research topic and provide an overview of their work, listing aims and objectives and summarising approaches.
- For their research plan students should consider starting with a question, then a hypothesis, before moving on to detail an approach. Students should avoid using bullet points. The research plan should show the methods behind a project but also provide a wider view of the project as a whole. This should help students begin to frame their PhD thesis.

- It is expected that an iterative conversation with the supervisory team will help with the refinement of the report and students should allow ample time for receiving feedback from supervisors.
- Students should avoid including any content in their initial review report that they would be unable to discuss fully in the review meeting.
- Students should ensure that they review and proofread their initial review report carefully before submitting it.

The Initial Review Meeting

- Students are expected to provide a verbal overview of their project, without notes, and should be able to answer questions concerning their reasons for undertaking the project. Students will not be asked to deliver a PowerPoint presentation.
- Students should take the opportunity in the initial review meeting to raise any issues or concerns that they may have relating to the project or to their studies more generally.
- Students should note that their progress monitors are interested in their research area and will use their experience to provide oversight of the project and help to guide it. Students should discuss any suggestions made by progress monitors with their supervisor(s). Students may feel the need to defend their reasoning and methodology to progress monitors and should do so respectfully.
- Please note that while for the differentiation and annual progress review meetings there is a choice of official outcomes (Recommendations) for the progress monitors (e.g. Satisfactory – Proceed) the only possible outcome from the initial review is to proceed to differentiation. Students cannot be asked to repeat the initial review.

Following the Initial Review Meeting

- A record of the initial review will be made in QGIS a short time after the review meeting. This record will include any written feedback provided by the progress monitors. Students will receive an automated email to notify them when the record is available for them to view in QGIS.
- One of the aims of the initial review is to help students with their preparation towards differentiation. It is important to consider carefully any feedback received from the progress monitors during the initial review and address this before the differentiation meeting. While projects do change all the time and unexpected events can shift the focus of a project, it is important to have a fully developed plan and understanding of the project by the time differentiation is due. The conversation and feedback from the initial review will help to accomplish this.
- Further information about all the PGR assessment milestones can be found on the QUB [Assessment Support Hub](#) pages and in the [Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes](#) (Section 5. Progress).

PROGRESS MONITORING: DIFFERENTIATION

Differentiation is a formal process intended to assess your progress and for the progress monitors to assess the feasibility of the project. It is your opportunity to raise any issues about feasibility or challenges. It is equivalent to an exam and has a formal outcome with the progress monitors making one of the following recommendations:

- i. That the student's performance is satisfactory, and that the student be permitted to proceed to the next stage. For students who are required to differentiate to Doctoral status (e.g. PhD students), this shall comprise a recommendation to permit registration on the appropriate research degree programme.*
- ii. That, notwithstanding some concerns, which the student and supervisory team should act upon, the student's overall performance is satisfactory, and that the student be permitted to proceed to the next stage. For students who are required to differentiate to Doctoral status (e.g. PhD students), this shall comprise a recommendation to permit registration on the appropriate research degree programme.*
- iii. That the student's performance is unsatisfactory, and that a further assessment be held within a specified period (normally 3 months FTE) to determine whether progress on the programme shall be recommended. For students who are required to differentiate to Doctoral status (e.g. PhD students), this may comprise a recommendation that the student be permitted a second attempt at differentiation. Students may not make more than two attempts at differentiation/Annual Progress Review. Students shall normally be offered a second attempt before recommendation iv or v is made.*
- iv. That the student's performance is unsatisfactory and that a submission for the appropriate Master's degree examination (MPhil, or as specified in appropriate programme specifications) be recommended instead of a submission for a Doctoral degree examination, for students enrolled on a Doctoral programme.*
- v. That the student's performance is unsatisfactory and that no submission for a Doctoral degree or Master's degree examination be recommended, and that registration be terminated.*

In a first differentiation meeting only the first three outcomes may be recommended (i. to iii. above). In the case of outcome iii. a second differentiation attempt will be permitted within three months. Students are not permitted to make more than two differentiation attempts overall.

The Differentiation Meeting

- Please note that differentiation meetings will not be rescheduled at short notice (i.e. less than one month before the scheduled date) unless the student cannot attend due to exceptional circumstances (e.g. sudden illness or being on temporary withdrawal). If you do not submit your report on time the progress monitors can deem your progress to be unsatisfactory ([Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes](#), 6.5.4). In this case you will be required to attempt differentiation again in three months' time. Please note that you may only attempt differentiation twice ([Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes](#), 6.5.4).
- Don't be daunted – you have been through initial review; differentiation is similar but more formal. Take the meeting seriously, be well-prepared and professional. You will give a ten minute PowerPoint presentation covering progress so far and detailed plans for your project which will start the conversation. Think of the meeting as a sort of mini-PhD viva (though you are not expected to have all the answers at this stage!) Anticipate that you may receive questions in the meeting about any of the content included in your report. If you are asked a specific question and you do not know the answer, be honest and state that you will look into it.
- The two assigned progress monitors are interested in your area and will use their experience to provide oversight of your project and help to guide it. Discuss any suggestions made by progress monitors with your supervisor(s). You may feel the need to defend your reasoning and methodology to progress monitors; please do so respectfully.

- Your principal supervisor and a differentiation chair should also be present at the meeting, in addition to the progress monitors. The differentiation chair is there to ensure that the meeting is conducted in a way that is consistent with School standards.
- If you have any issues/concerns in relation to your supervision (or any other subject affecting your studies) you are strongly encouraged to raise these with the progress monitors.
- You should learn the outcome at the conclusion of the meeting or very soon afterwards. The progress monitors will complete a form with feedback and the recommendation that you (a) proceed, (b) proceed with some documented concerns (and suggested solutions), or (c) require a further attempt at differentiation. In the event of (c), do not be discouraged – you then have three months to address the issues raised before you make your second (and final) attempt. Any students who are required to make a second attempt at differentiation are invited to meet the PGR Director to talk through any concerns.

Structure of the Differentiation Meeting

- Meeting starts with just the two progress monitors and principal supervisor (or a member of the supervisory team) while the student waits outside.
- After ~five minutes the student is invited to join the meeting. The principal supervisor (or a member of the supervisory team) can stay during the meeting or can leave at this point.
- The student gives a ten-minute PowerPoint presentation covering progress so far and detailed plans for the project.
- The progress monitors discuss with the student their project and progress/plans.
- The principal supervisor (or a member of the supervisory team) is asked to step outside if they are still present and the student is asked to comment on any difficulties they may be encountering including with the supervisory team.
- The student is asked to step outside while the two progress monitors confer.
- The student is invited back and the outcome of the differentiation is confirmed including next steps.
- Progress monitors fill in the differentiation progress monitor MS Form and submit it.

The Differentiation Form

- You will receive by email an Outlook calendar invitation including a link to complete the School's [Differentiation form](#) and report (in Word) online. The progress report must be converted to PDF before uploading.
- The names and email addresses of your progress monitors and differentiation chair can be found on the Outlook calendar invitation. Please pay particular attention to inputting the correct email addresses in the MS Form or the form will fail and will not send your report to the progress monitors on time.
- You will be sent some examples of historical differentiation reports which you may find useful when producing your own report.
- You are expected to work closely with your supervisory team when preparing your differentiation report and it is normal to receive several rounds of feedback and to improve your report over a period of time. Please take this into account and allow sufficient time so that your supervisory team can give you appropriate feedback.

- In your differentiation report you will include your thesis title and a mini-abstract. Take care in ensuring that it is a considered and well-written summary of your research (approx. 400-500 words).
- You will complete a background section – a mini literature review. In approx. 1,000 words you will highlight the project background and rationale for the progress monitors. Importantly, towards the end of the section you will need to clearly identify the knowledge gap that your project is intended to fill.
- In the section on research questions and objectives, state the aim that your project is going to address. It may be quite challenging to distil your synopsis down to one page. Frame research questions and within these hypotheses (and even predictions). You may include some information on experimental design but do not go into too much detail around the methods.
- In the thesis plan section progress monitors will want to see that you have mapped out ideas for your chapters, e.g. Chapter One – Literature Review, Chapter Two – First Study, etc. It is acknowledged that some of these may change considerably by the time that you reach third year. Consult with your supervisor as the typical number of thesis chapters will vary according to your particular area of science. It would be expected that the plan will contain the greatest amount of detail on the earlier chapters. You can state that e.g. Studies Two and Three may be informed by Study One. You may want to include some figures here.
- For the results-to-date section do not worry if you do not have results at the time of your differentiation. There may well be valid reasons for this. You should map out how you intend to analyse your data when you do obtain it. If you do have some results, you should showcase these concisely in no more than two pages. You will be presenting the statistical analyses that you used to determine these results, with the most significant results highlighted. You may want to start this section with some descriptive results, then move on to inferential statistics.
- In the work plan section you should outline the timeline for the work that you propose to do using e.g. a Gantt chart.
- In the risks and contingency plans section you should flag a small number of significant issues that could arise.
- In the innovation and publication plan section you should show your ambition towards publishing three or four papers. Target good journals that you are aware of in your subject area.
- You should draw on the expertise of your supervisors who are expected to comment on a draft of your report. Make sure that you provide the report to your supervisor(s) at least two weeks before it is due to be submitted (i.e. at least five days before the meeting) so that they have time to review it.
- You will need to upload your differentiation report to Turnitin for an originality check. You will need to upload the Turnitin originality report when submitting your differentiation report. You should PDF the two documents together to upload a single document. You will be provided with a Turnitin link by the PGR team. Please contact biosciences-pg@qub.ac.uk if you cannot find your link or you are having issues generating the originality report. Guidance on the use of Turnitin is available from the University's [TurnitinUK Advice for Students](#) page.
- You will also be required to upload a completed Personal Development Plan template in PDF format. You will have the opportunity to become familiar with the Personal Development Plan through the School's PLANTS (Planning and Transferable Skills) module on which all first-year research students are enrolled for the second semester.

- The PowerPoint presentation does not need to be submitted in advance.
- Please make sure that you submit your differentiation report well in advance of the meeting and at least five working days beforehand. Please bear in mind that academics are very busy and that they must have adequate time to read your differentiation report or they will not be able to assess you in the meeting.

Differentiation Tips

- Your supervisory team is best equipped to help you pass differentiation. They have vast experience between them, have seen countless differentiation reports and are progress monitors themselves for other PhD students. Listen to their advice and make sure you take it on board. Ask them for a mock differentiation if you are worried about being nervous and not managing to get your answers out on the day.
- Do not send your differentiation report in late. It will raise concerns and implies that you do not value the progress monitors' time. You are also risking having to attempt differentiation a second time.
- Try to include data in your report and make sure you discuss your statistical analysis. While it is not an absolute requirement to have data when you attempt your first differentiation, the progress monitors will be naturally inquisitive about why there is no data included/available. Many things can go wrong when starting a project but by the time you reach differentiation you want to have a clear way forward and a solid plan to make up for any delays experienced in collecting data. The differentiation meeting unfortunately cannot be delayed if the project experiences delays for any reason. This is due to the fact that a second differentiation attempt (if required) has to take place within the first twelve months of the PhD for full time students (twenty-four months for part time students).
- If during your studies you reach a point where you are not able to focus on your PhD project for any reason (e.g. personal reasons, illness) we strongly suggest that you take a period of temporary withdrawal. This will in effect stop the clock on your PhD until you are able to focus on your studies again. In such cases the differentiation meeting will be scheduled to coincide with nine months of actual study time (therefore not taking into account the period of temporary withdrawal). If you would like to discuss taking a temporary withdrawal please contact biosciences-pg@qub.ac.uk.
- Further information about all the PGR assessment milestones can be found on the QUB [Assessment Support Hub](#) pages and in the [Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes](#) (Section 5. Progress).

PROGRESS MONITORING: ANNUAL PROGRESS REVIEW

Before the Annual Progress Review Meeting

- Students must undertake annual progress review (APR) at the time scheduled unless a period of withdrawal has been formally requested and approved. In case of last-minute illness please contact biosciences-pg@qub.ac.uk
- Students must ensure that they formally accept the Outlook calendar invitation to the APR meeting. If the scheduled date and time present any difficulties the student must contact biosciences-pg@qub.ac.uk as soon as possible and no later than two weeks after receiving the calendar invitation.
- In cases where a student submits their thesis for examination prior to the scheduled APR meeting date, the meeting will be cancelled.

- Students must submit their annual progress review report, thesis completion plan, Turnitin originality report, and Gantt chart via the School's [Annual Progress Review form](#) linked to in the Outlook calendar invitation at least one week prior to the date of the APR meeting. This is essential in order to allow progress monitors sufficient time to read and assess the report.
- Please allow adequate time to obtain the originality report. Please note you must upload your Turnitin originality report and not the receipt from Turnitin. You will be provided with a Turnitin link by the PGR team. Please contact biosciences-pg@qub.ac.uk if you cannot find your link or you are having issues generating the originality report. Guidance on the use of Turnitin is available from the University's [TurnitinUK Advice for Students](#) page. Please do not leave your Turnitin submission to the last minute in case you encounter difficulties when submitting to Turnitin.
- The PowerPoint presentation does not need to be submitted in advance.

The Annual Progress Review Meeting

- Meeting starts with just the two progress monitors and principal supervisor (or a member of the supervisory team) while the student waits outside.
- After ~five minutes the student is invited to join the meeting. The principal supervisor (or a member of the supervisory team) can stay during the meeting or can leave at this point.
- The student gives a ten-minute PowerPoint presentation covering the progress made from the previous APR or differentiation including future plans and thesis submission timeline.
- The progress monitors discuss with the student their project and progress/plans.
- The principal supervisor (or a member of the supervisory team) is asked to step outside if they are still present and the student is asked to comment on any difficulties they may be encountering including with the supervisory team.
- The student is asked to step outside while the two progress monitors confer.
- The student is invited back and the outcome of the APR is confirmed including next steps.
- Progress monitors fill in the APR progress monitor MS Form and submit it.

Please note that at the end of the annual progress review meeting an official outcome (Recommendation) is recorded by the progress monitors and this is communicated to the student. The [Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes](#) (5.5.4) outline the possible outcomes from the annual progress review meeting:

- i. That the student's performance is satisfactory, and that the student be permitted to proceed to the next stage. For students who are required to differentiate to Doctoral status (e.g. PhD students), this shall comprise a recommendation to permit registration on the appropriate research degree programme.*
- ii. That, notwithstanding some concerns, which the student and supervisory team should act upon, the student's overall performance is satisfactory, and that the student be permitted to proceed to the next stage. For students who are required to differentiate to Doctoral status (e.g. PhD students), this shall comprise a recommendation to permit registration on the appropriate research degree programme.*
- iii. That the student's performance is unsatisfactory, and that a further assessment be held within a specified period (normally 3 months FTE) to determine whether progress on the programme shall be recommended. For students who are required to differentiate to Doctoral status (e.g. PhD students), this may comprise a recommendation that the student be permitted a second attempt at*

differentiation. Students may not make more than two attempts at differentiation/Annual Progress Review. Students shall normally be offered a second attempt before recommendation iv or v is made.

iv. That the student's performance is unsatisfactory and that a submission for the appropriate Master's degree examination (MPhil, or as specified in appropriate programme specifications) be recommended instead of a submission for a Doctoral degree examination, for students enrolled on a Doctoral programme.

v. That the student's performance is unsatisfactory and that no submission for a Doctoral degree or Master's degree examination be recommended, and that registration be terminated.

Following the Annual Progress Review Meeting

- A record of the APR outcome will be made in QGIS a short time after the review meeting. This record will include any written feedback provided by the progress monitors. Students will receive an automated email to notify them when the record is available for them to view in QGIS.
- Further information about all the PGR assessment milestones can be found on the QUB [Assessment Support Hub](#) pages and in the [Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes](#) (Section 5. Progress).

RECORDING FORMAL MEETINGS WITH SUPERVISORS

All research students in Biological Sciences are expected to record in QGIS a short summary of at least one meeting per month with their supervisor(s). This is a way to record progress step-by-step as you move through your degree programme. All members of the supervisory team should attend at least half of these meetings in each academic year. For instructions on how to do this, please see the [QGIS for Research Students](#) page.

There should also be regular informal meetings.



PGR SYMPOSIUM

The School holds an annual PGR student symposium which normally takes place in June. All students are expected to take part and present their work unless they are registered on, or have previously had, a Thesis Only/Writing-Up year, or are on a formal temporary withdrawal from their course. Students not eligible to present are, however, very welcome to attend.

The symposium serves as a valuable opportunity to practice presenting your work in a supportive environment and to learn about the broader research happening within the School.



THESIS SUBMISSION AND EXAMINATION

Please note that **all** full-time PhD students are required to submit their thesis to Student Registry within three years of first registering or within a **maximum** of four years. Procedures for submission are detailed on the [Submission Process](#) webpage.

Students who do not submit within the maximum period of study will be required to produce a concession request for permission to continue, which will be granted only if exceptional circumstances apply. For information on what constitutes the normal period of study for your research degree programme, please refer to Section 4 of the University's [Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes](#).

Students must give formal notice of their intention to submit their thesis. You should do this via Service Requests in QGIS **at least three months before your intended submission date**. Intention to Submit requests must include your final thesis title and a planned submission date (DD/MM/YY). Submitted requests are then processed by the School with the approval of your principal supervisor.

If you intend to graduate in summer, you are advised to submit your thesis for examination in early January (early June for winter graduation). Deadlines for submission of the final thesis are available on the [Important Deadlines](#) page.

Once your Intention to Submit request has been submitted and approved, your supervisor(s) must nominate both an internal and external examiner for your thesis through the School's [Nomination of Examiners form](#). (If you are an employee of Queen's, or have been so at any time during your research degree, **both** examiners must be external). These nominated examiners must be approved by the University before you are allowed to submit your thesis.

Information on how your thesis must be presented and submitted is available from the [Thesis Format](#) and [Online Forms](#) pages. Make sure that you include with your thesis the Pre-Viva Submission Form (and chapter cover pages if you are submitting under the Thesis with Publications model – see Thesis with Publications section below).

As part of the examination of your thesis you must attend a viva exam with the examiners and an independent convenor. The viva will normally be held approximately two months after the submission of your thesis. Information on viva procedures and outcomes is available under section 7.7 (The Examinations Process) of the University's [Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes](#).

For answers to frequently asked questions relating to thesis submission and examination, please see the [FAQ](#) page.

Further information and guidance on thesis submission and examination is available from the [Assessment Support Hub](#).

THESIS WITH PUBLICATIONS

The University has recently introduced a new thesis model, Thesis with Publications (TWP).

The model is an alternative to the traditional monograph-style submission and allows a research student to present a thesis which incorporates publications that they have authored or co-authored during their research degree programme at the University.

Materials acceptable for inclusion are those:

- Already published
- Accepted for publication
- Submitted for publication
- Drafted as a potential publication

Publications should be suitable for submission to externally refereed contexts such as scholarly or scientific journals and conference proceedings and should reflect the quantity, quality, and originality of research and analysis expected of a student submitting a standard monograph thesis.

Please see the [Thesis with Publications guidelines](#) for further information.

PURE

Pure is the University's Research Portal, the research repository of the University, and all postgraduate research students are strongly encouraged to make use of it to showcase their research activities (conference attendance, publications, etc.)

All research students are also required to upload an electronic copy of their final thesis to Pure (see [Final Thesis – Pure Submission](#)).

For further information and guidance, please refer to the following webpages:

[Open Access: The Research Portal](#)

[Open Access: Training](#)

[Theses: Queen's E-Thesis](#)

Queries may be directed to the Institutional Repository Officer, Dr Michael O'Connor:
michael.oconnor@qub.ac.uk



GRADUATION

When the Student Registry office receives the final, electronic copy of your thesis which you will upload to Pure (see [Final Thesis – Pure Submission](#)) they will generate a qualification letter which confirms that you have qualified for the degree of Doctor or Master of Philosophy. Student Registry will also amend your student account in QGIS to show that you have completed all elements of your research programme and are eligible for graduation.

When you receive your qualification letter you will be eligible for graduation. You will receive an email to your Queen's student email address that will advise you when the registration portal for graduation will open in QGIS. Instructions on how to complete registration for graduation will be contained in the email.

Further information on graduation is available from the [Graduation](#) pages.



ABSENCE/TEMPORARY WITHDRAWAL

Withdrawals should be applied for in advance via the School's [Withdrawal Request Form](#). A temporary withdrawal “stops the clock” on your research degree so that days of temporary withdrawal do not count towards the total study period permitted to you.

Temporary withdrawals cannot be recognised unless they are formally requested and pass through the approval process involving the School and Student Registry. **Note that if a student is “active” (i.e. not temporarily withdrawn) for at least 20 calendar days of a month, full tuition fees for that month apply and the monthly stipend (if a studentship is held) may be paid.**

Funded students should refer to their funder's terms and conditions, or contact the Postgraduate Awards team at pgawards@qub.ac.uk, to confirm the implications that a temporary withdrawal may have for their funding arrangements. Some funders such as DfE and UKRI offer sick pay for a limited period, and if you wish to claim this you must obtain a Statement of Fitness for Work document for the relevant dates and submit it to biosciences-pg@qub.ac.uk as soon as possible.

Visa holders should contact Immigration Support at immigration@qub.ac.uk to check implications for their visa and ensure that they are not at risk of breaching UKVI's regulations around absence.

All students returning from temporary withdrawal must complete the School's [Return from Temporary Withdrawal form](#) in advance of their approved return date. If an extension to the withdrawal period is required, a fresh [Withdrawal Request form](#) must be completed – again, in advance of the originally expected return date.

If you are unable to come in to work because of illness or self-isolation, you must inform your supervisor(s) and must also contact biosciences-pg@qub.ac.uk if you are absent for three working days. You are able to self-certify for five working days. If you are absent for longer than five days, a medical certificate is required and should be sent to biosciences-pg@qub.ac.uk.

ATTENDANCE MONITORING OF STUDENT VISA HOLDERS

The UK Visa and Immigration Service (UKVI) requires confirmation that International students are attending the University and are fully engaged with their studies. **For the University to continue to sponsor student visas, students who hold such a visa are required to record in QSIS at least one meeting per month with their supervisors until they submit their thesis for examination. Meetings must be recorded by the end of the month in which they take place.** For assistance with this, please see [QSIS for Research Students](#).

Failure to record at least one meeting per month will be noted by Immigration Support who are required to report repeated unauthorised absences to the Home Office.

For further information on this, students are advised to contact Immigration Support at immigration@qub.ac.uk, or in person at the One Elmwood Student Centre.

In addition, an Absence Notification or Off-Campus Study Notification form (as appropriate) must be completed and submitted if those on a student visa intend to take annual leave or travel outside Northern Ireland (including travel to the rest of the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland). Forms are available from the [Student Route Engagement Monitoring](#) page (see Absence from Studies and Off-Campus Study sections).



TRAVEL

All travel requires completion one month in advance of the School's [Travel Justification and Risk Assessment Form](#). It is essential that you do not travel unless you receive notification that your travel has been fully approved. Travelling without the required approval will mean that you are not insured and are in breach of the terms and conditions of your student visa, if you hold one. This can lead to very serious consequences for you, for the School, and for the University.

All travel must be booked through the University's travel agent. Quotes should be obtained and shared with the School's Purchasing Team (sbs-purchasing@qub.ac.uk) along with details of how the travel is to be funded. Please contact the Purchasing Team if you require assistance with this process.

Completion of the Travel Justification and Risk Assessment Form is not required for personal travel. However, if you are an International student on a student visa, please be reminded that for **any** absence from the University (including annual leave) you must complete an Absence Notification form (see section Attendance Monitoring of Student Visa Holders, above).

The above information is summarised in the following table.

Reason for Absence	International Students on a Student Visa	Other Students
Travel for study/course-related purposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Travel Justification and Risk Assessment form • Complete Off-Campus Study Notification form and submit to biosciences-pg@qub.ac.uk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Travel Justification and Risk Assessment Form
Annual leave (involving travel)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Authorised Absence Form for Sponsored Students and submit to biosciences-pg@qub.ac.uk • Obtain advance permission for annual leave from your supervisor(s) and keep a record of all annual leave taken 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No form required • Obtain advance permission for annual leave from your supervisor(s) and keep a record of all annual leave taken
Annual leave (not involving travel)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Authorised Absence Form for Sponsored Students and submit to biosciences-pg@qub.ac.uk • Obtain advance permission for annual leave from your supervisor(s) and keep a record of all annual leave taken 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No form required • Obtain advance permission for annual leave from your supervisor(s) and keep a record of all annual leave taken

Note that if any of the following circumstances apply, you will still need to complete the appropriate form(s):

- You will be travelling within the UK or Ireland.
- You will be travelling to your home country.
- You will be travelling and returning to Northern Ireland on the same day.
- You will be travelling on University closure days/holidays.
- Your travel is being arranged at short notice, or you have not managed to submit the formal request a month in advance.
- Your travel has been arranged by your supervisor or by staff belonging to an institution outside Queen's. Note that your travel should **always** be booked through the School's Purchasing Team/University travel agent.
- Your travel is a mandatory requirement of your degree programme (for example, it is part of a DTP or CDT on which you are enrolled).
- Your travel is to attend a course or other event arranged by Queen's.
- Your travel is for the purpose of conducting fieldwork.

TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIPS

Details of University travel scholarships are available from the [Scholarship Opportunities](#) page.



HOLIDAYS

Full-time research students are entitled to take up to 40 days of annual leave each year (20 days for part-time students) **including** public holidays and [University closure days](#). For student visa holders certain exceptions to this may apply due to UKVI restrictions around total periods of absence. In cases where a student does not start their degree at the beginning of a calendar year or is on temporary withdrawal for part of a year, holiday entitlement is determined on a pro rata basis. All holidays must be agreed with supervisors in advance.

For any annual leave outside University closure days, students on a Tier 4 visa must complete an Absence Notification form and submit it to biosciences-pg@gub.ac.uk. (See section Attendance Monitoring of Student Visa Holders, above).

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

By enrolling at Queen's University Belfast, you undertake to abide by all of our regulations, policies and procedures so **it is important that you familiarise yourself with them.**

The University's [General Regulations](#) contain important information about the rules governing progression, assessment, degree classification and postgraduate awards on all programmes. They assure the University's academic standards and ensure all students are treated consistently and equitably. They are also part of the formal contract between you and the University.

All students are expected to behave in collegiate and respectful ways when interacting with other students and with members of staff. We have an important civic role to play in ensuring the health and safety of our wider community. It is up to each of us to conscientiously do our part. We must also ensure that we behave with integrity and treat each other with respect ensuring that we adhere to public health guidance. Students are asked to keep in mind the Queen's core values: Integrity, Connected, Ambition, Respect, and Excellence (iCARE).

Breaches of University regulations may be dealt with under:

[Conduct Regulations](#)

or, where appropriate

Fitness to Practise Procedure

If you have any problems understanding any of these regulations, policies and procedures, or if you have any questions, it is important that you discuss them with your supervisor(s) or Advice SU in the One Elmwood Student Centre.

The University's [Student Charter](#) sets out how the University will work in partnership with you to support your learning and help you to realise your ambitions, as well as the standards of behaviour and personal responsibility that we expect from our students. Students should be aware of their duties and responsibilities towards fellow students, University staff, visitors to the University and the local community.

The responsibilities of students whilst engaging with their supervisor over the course of their RDP are highlighted at various points throughout the [Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes](#).

Research students' responsibilities include:

- **Personal and professional development, including, where possible, recognising when they need help and seeking it in a timely manner.**
- **Maintaining regular contact with the supervisory team.**
- **Preparing adequately for meetings with supervisors.**
- **Setting and keeping to timetables and deadlines, including planning and submitting work as and when required, and maintaining satisfactory progress with the research degree programme.**
- **Maintaining research records in such a way that they can be accessed and understood by anyone with a legitimate need to see them.**
- **Raising awareness of any specific needs or circumstances likely to affect their work.**
- **Attending any development opportunities (research-related or other) that have been identified when agreeing development needs with supervisors.**
- **Being familiar with the regulations and policies that affect them, including those relating to their award, health and safety, intellectual property, electronic repositories, and ethical research.**



TURNITIN

The University uses Turnitin for detection of plagiarism and all PGR theses submitted for examination will be analysed with this software for originality. As such, principal supervisors are required to sign a Pre-Viva Submission Form to confirm that appropriate sections of the thesis have been submitted to Turnitin in line with the [Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes](#), 7.1.5, before the thesis will be accepted by Student Records.

Any queries about, or requests for assistance with, Turnitin may be directed to the PGR Team: biosciences-pg@qub.ac.uk

ACADEMIC OFFENCES

In order to safeguard our academic standards and the integrity of our awards the University has procedures in place for dealing with suspected academic misconduct. The procedure details types of academic misconduct, such as cheating in an examination, plagiarism, collusion and fabrication, how suspected offences are investigated and the penalties that can be imposed. The procedure also details students' rights of appeal in cases relating to academic misconduct.

[Procedures for Dealing with Academic Offences – a Student Guide](#)

[Academic Offences Procedure](#)



HOUSE RULES (INCLUDING HEALTH, SAFETY, AND ETHICS)

- Lab coats should only be worn while in the laboratory.
- Normal working hours are Monday to Friday, 7 am to 7 pm. In exceptional circumstances you may be required to work later in the evening, or at weekends. In this case you **must** obtain and complete an Out-of-Hours/Lone Working form, have it signed by your supervisor, and ensure that you have the completed form in your possession when on the premises. Security (x5099) must be informed when you start **and** finish your out-of-hours work session (**and** in advance of the session, if you are working in Lennoxvale) and you must also sign the book at Reception. The emergency number for security is x2222.
- Prior to undertaking any lab work, COSHH forms **must** be completed and signed by both the principal supervisor and COSHH Adviser (see [Safety Information](#)).
- Students working at a desk in the building must ensure that their workspace is kept clean, tidy, and free from safety hazards at all times. **Do not** leave food or drinks containers around your workspace and **do not** position around your desk boxes or other materials which could create a trip hazard or fire safety issue. Research students are expected to aim for professional standards, and these include maintaining a safe and presentable working area.
- A [Research Ethics Committee](#) exists within the Faculty of Medicine, Health and Life Sciences. Students with questions relating to ethics in their research should discuss these with their supervisors in the first instance. The Faculty Research Ethics Officer, Mr Stefan Curran, is happy to assist students and their supervisors with applications to the Committee. Stefan may be contacted at: facultyrecmhl@gub.ac.uk

- Building access – any issues should be brought to the attention of Chief Technician Chris Preshaw (c.preshaw@qub.ac.uk).
- When submitting their final thesis to Pure, students should ensure that they complete a Leaver's Form – Part B which the PGR Team will send to them by email in the period following their viva. Full details of the leaver's process are contained in the table below.

Form to be completed	Who completes the form and when	How the form is accessed and submitted
PGR Student Leaver Checklist – Part A	Students transferring to Thesis Only registration status. OR Students submitting their thesis for examination, if they have not been on Thesis Only registration status.	The form is available via the online Thesis Only Registration Request page. Student completes the form which is then uploaded by the supervisor as part of an online Thesis Only Registration Request .
PGR Student Leaver Checklist – Part B	All students one week prior to submission of their final thesis to Pure .	The form is sent to students by email in the period following their viva. It can also be obtained by request from biosciences-pg@qub.ac.uk Student completes the form in consultation with their supervisor and submits it to biosciences-pg@qub.ac.uk

HELP/STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES



Any comments, questions, or concerns in relation to your studies may be directed to the School's PGR Team (biosciences-pg@qub.ac.uk) or to the Postgraduate Research Director (g.arnott@qub.ac.uk).

Details of the full range of student support services, from counselling to childcare and careers, is available on the University's website: [Support and Services](#).

Students who are in **emotional distress** and require **emergency support** should contact:
Inspire – (24/7 helpline – Freephone) – 0808 800 0016 (Wellbeing Support)
Lifeline – (24/7 helpline – Freephone) – 0808 808 8000 (Crisis Support)
Samaritans – 116 123
The GP out-of-hours number for the University area is 028 9079 6220.

For external support in relation to **food and essentials**, please contact the [Advice NI](#) Community Helpline: 0808 802 0020 (Mon-Fri 9am-5pm).

Students with concerns about their own **wellbeing** or that of others should refer to the [Student Wellbeing Service](#).
For **International students**, specialist guidance and assistance is available from the [Immigration Support Service](#).

The MHLS Faculty employs a teaching associate, Mr Justin O'Hagan, to provide one-to-one support in the **academic use of English for students whose first language is not English**. To request a referral, please contact the PGR Team: biosciences-pg@qub.ac.uk The School also hosts timetabled support sessions for non-native English speakers throughout the academic year.

If you require support due to a **disability**, please visit [Accessible Learning Support](#).

If you are experiencing **financial difficulty**, you may wish to consider applying to the University's Student Support Fund (if you are from Northern Ireland or Great Britain) or the Financial Assistance Fund (which is open to applications from all students who may be in need). Please visit [Student Financial Support](#).

The University's Student **Cost of Living** Hub is online at: <https://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/my-queens/cost-of-living/>

To request guidance on **budgeting** please contact the [Advice Centre](#) at Queen's Students' Union.

If you feel that you are a victim of **bullying and harassment**, please refer to the available [guidance](#).

The Student **Maternity, Maternity Support and Adoption** Policy is available at: <https://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/sgc/wellbeing/PoliciesProcedures/StudentMaternity/>

POSTGRADUATE WELLBEING ADVISER

The University's Postgraduate Wellbeing Adviser is Ms Megan O'Brien. Megan has over thirty years' experience in support, information, advice and guidance through youth work and community groups, probation project work, and disability organisations. She has been working with postgraduate students as a wellbeing adviser since 2021.

You can catch up with Megan at the Graduate School on "Wellbeing Wednesdays" (every Wednesday, 10 am to 12 noon) in the Graduate School's first floor social space.



POSTGRADUATE STUDENT VOICE COMMITTEE (PGR)

The purpose of the Student Voice Committee is to ensure that Schools and Institutes receive evaluation and feedback from students on the quality of their academic provision and associated activities, and to provide a mechanism whereby they can seek the views of students on matters of policy related to course development and review.

Student membership of the Postgraduate Student Voice Committee (PGR) in Biological Sciences/IGFS is determined through a process administered by the Students' Union's Student Voice team (see [Become a Course Rep](#)). The Committee normally meets once every 2-3 months during the academic year.

Student members are expected to represent their peers and to raise any questions, concerns or suggestions that they may have in relation to their degree programme or general experience at the University. The Committee is represented at the Postgraduate Forum, a University-wide Committee that is chaired by the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research and Enterprise. Student members of the Committee may also be invited to attend meetings of the Biological Sciences/IGFS Postgraduate Research Committee, which deals with a range of issues relating to postgraduate research.

Membership of the Student Voice Committee also consists of academic staff representatives. The Staff Chair for the PGR meetings is Dr Gareth Arnott. If you are interested in learning more about the Committee and its functions, please contact: biosciences-pg@qub.ac.uk



DEMONSTRATING

- All postgraduate research students may have the opportunity to carry out demonstrating duties for undergraduate or postgraduate taught practical classes during their studies. **Students are not permitted to demonstrate until they have completed appropriate training and registered on [QWork](#).**
- Students must ensure that they are familiar with the University's [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#).
- The University strongly recommends that students on full-time programmes devote **no more than fifteen hours per week to paid employment** (please ensure you check with your sponsor, if you are a funded student, as the number of permitted working hours may differ). There is strong evidence to suggest that significant levels of part-time work can compromise your academic progress and affect degree outcomes.
- Please note that International students may have prohibitions or restrictions on working in the UK. **It is very important that you confirm you have a legal right to work and that you don't exceed the permitted hours as stated on your visa.** If you work in excess of these restrictions, the University must report this as a breach of your visa conditions to UKVI. This may result in the University withdrawing sponsorship of your visa (which means that you will no longer be permitted to study at the University). Further information can be found at: <http://www.qub.ac.uk/International/International-students/Visa-and-Immigration/>
- We do urge you to be sensible about how you manage your study, work, and social time to get the best result you can from your degree. If you do have financial pressures that mean you have to work more hours than is advisable, please seek advice. Advisors at the One Elmwood Student Centre can give you advice on funds that are available to help students in your position. The [Learning Development Service](#) can also offer advice on time management.



THE THOMAS J. MORAN GRADUATE SCHOOL: TRAINING, DEVELOPMENT, AND SUPPORT

The [Graduate School](#), located in the Lynn Building on the main Queen's campus, is a dedicated postgraduate facility with a whole range of related activities running throughout the year to support postgraduates. The building features a dedicated silent study area, group study rooms, and rooms that are bookable for conference use.

At Queen's you are expected to undertake thirty days of training and development (internal and/or external) during the course of your PhD. The Graduate School administers the [Postgraduate Development Programme](#) which exists to support research students in the development of research skills and to enhance their employability through career and personal development.

All Graduate School training events are bookable through the University's [MyFuture](#) platform. Once you have logged in to MyFuture go to Events, and in the search bar enter 'GS' to search all Graduate School training and events.

Any training you have booked through MyFuture and have attended will be automatically added to your training record.

Research students can also record other instances of training and development on their training plan. Details on how to do this and more information on recording your training can be found in the Graduate School's [FAQs](#).

Funding is available to assist current postgraduate students in organising academic events and cultural interventions, which work to bring together the wider communities within both postgraduate taught and postgraduate research student bodies at Queen's: [Postgraduate-led initiatives](#)

Visit the Graduate School website for full information on all that it has to offer the postgraduate community: <http://www.qub.ac.uk/graduate-school/>



MCCLAY LIBRARY

The [McClay Library](#), located on College Park Avenue to the rear of the main campus, brings together wide-ranging library, computing and media services in a single location as well as offering facilities for quiet study and group work.

Other libraries at Queen's include the Medical Library in the Mulhouse Building (Belfast Royal Victoria Hospital, Mulhouse Road) and the Biomedical Library (Medical Biology Centre, Lisburn Road). Mr Patrick Elliott, Biological Sciences Subject Librarian, is contactable at: p.elliott@qub.ac.uk

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)



Is there support for students preparing for initial review, differentiation, and annual progress review?

Yes: in addition to the guidance contained within this handbook and the [Assessment Support Hub](#) the PGR Director delivers annual sessions offering information, guidance, and Q&A on all progress monitoring processes. You will be notified by email when these sessions are scheduled.

How are my tuition fees calculated?

PGR tuition fees are calculated by the month. In the month that a student commences their studies, a monthly fee will only be calculated if the student is deemed to be in attendance on, or before, the 5th of that month. In all subsequent months, a monthly fee will be calculated if the student is deemed to be “active” (i.e. not on a temporary withdrawal) for 20 calendar days or more. The PGR fees cycle runs from October to September inclusive. When you register each September as part of the annual Enrolment & Registration process, you are registering for the **full** annual fees cycle (i.e. twelve monthly fees). If you submit your thesis or your registration status changes at some point during that cycle, your annual fees will be adjusted at the time of submission or of the change in registration status.

I receive a stipend for my research that is paid through the University. How may I access my payslips?

You may access, view, and download payslips on a secure, self-service basis on [Queen's Online](#) (QoL) using your Queen's student username and password. Navigate to Service Applications > Admin > iTrent Self Service.

When do I need to submit my thesis for examination?

It is expected that students will submit their thesis within the normal study period (three years FTE for PhD) and at latest within the maximum study period (four years FTE for PhD). The concluding date of your maximum study period is indicated to you by the Latest Submission Date that you will see in QGIS. Any student who is unable to submit within the maximum study period must make an exceptional circumstances based case for later submission via the form RDP Exception – Registration and Submission (available from the Research Degree Programmes section of the [Resource Library](#) page) supported by appropriate evidence. Requests must be reviewed and approved by both the School's PGR Director and Academic Affairs.

How do I submit my thesis for examination?

The thesis must be submitted to Student Registry, via the School's PGR Team (biosciences-pg@qub.ac.uk), in accordance with the procedures detailed on the [Submission Process](#) page. You should ensure that you produce an intention to submit request in QGIS approximately three months before your planned date of submission. You should also note that the nomination of examiners

process must be complete before Student Registry can accept submission of your thesis. For further information, please visit Registry's [FAQ](#) page.

Do I need to register for the new academic year even after I have submitted my thesis for examination?

Yes: if you have submitted your thesis for examination (you may also have had your viva exam) you need to register for the new academic year in September *unless* you have submitted the final, electronic version of your thesis to Pure. Your registration status will be Graduation Only, which carries no associated fees.

If I have a problem, whom should I contact?

If the problem relates to registration or other administrative aspect of your studies, please contact the PGR Team at biosciences-pg@qub.ac.uk. If you have concerns about your progress, you should approach the PGR Director (g.arnott@qub.ac.uk). All issues will be addressed sensitively and confidentially. If English is not your first language and you wish to develop your academic English, you may contact biosciences-pg@qub.ac.uk and request a referral to the Faculty's Teaching Associate for English Language Support. If you require support in another area, such as personal wellbeing, please refer to the Student Support Services section of this handbook and the University's [Support Services](#) webpages.

How can I apply for a temporary withdrawal?

This must be done in advance through completion of the School's [Withdrawal Request Form](#). You may be asked to submit supporting evidence so that your request may be approved by the PGR Director. Be aware that employment is not normally considered an acceptable reason for requesting temporary withdrawal. Student visa holders should discuss any planned temporary withdrawal request with [Immigration Support](#) prior to completing the request form.

Where can I find the University's PGR study regulations?

Please visit the [Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes](#) page.

The regulations are supplemented by the [Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes](#).

Can I change my personal details that are recorded in QGIS?

You can make changes to some of your personal details (e.g. address) by editing your information in QGIS. For any major changes, e.g. to your name or date of birth, please refer to the [Correcting Your Name](#) page.

It is important that your records are up-to-date at all times so that the University is able to provide you with accurate documents of confirmation.

Can I request a letter confirming my enrolment details as a student at the University?

The University offers a service whereby confirmation letters can be provided for a range of purposes. For further information please visit the [Attendance and Education Letters](#) page.



BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES/IGFS RESEARCH OVERVIEW

Our Research Ethos

The School of Biological Sciences aims to enhance the way we use technology in research, food security, microbiology, ecosystem biology, sustainability and many other related areas. The three research theme areas are detailed below.

- **Agri-Food Systems and Human Nutrition**

This theme focuses on how Agri-Food systems can be better positioned to provide safe, authentic and healthy diets with high-quality plant, livestock and aquaculture products, whilst supporting human and animal health in a way that is sustainable and resilient to climatic changes.

Underpinning these goals, the disciplinary expertise of the theme integrates basic and applied research from animal health and welfare, nutrition, performance and environmental and social impact (e.g. greenhouse gas emissions from livestock) to chemical contaminant and natural toxin detection, food microbiology, food fraud detection and food systems traceability and transparency, integrated into a holistic total systems approach.

Supported by underpinning expertise in cutting edge molecular, genomic, transcriptomic, proteomic and metabolomic technologies, artificial intelligence and simulation modelling, the goal of the theme is to support the transformation of global Agri-Food systems. This is with the purpose of maximising the benefits both to animal and human nutrition and health, while simultaneously reducing environmental impact, protecting ecological resources, supporting livelihoods and access to affordable safe foods, whilst upholding social, cultural, and ethical values. A system based on the principles of measurable integrity and impact.

Theme Leads: Professor Katrina Campbell (katrina.campbell@qub.ac.uk), Dr Katerina Theodoridou (k.theodoridou@qub.ac.uk)

- **Understanding Health and Disease**

The Understanding Health and Disease research theme covers humans, plants, and animals with research strengths in prevention, diagnostics, surveillance, epidemiology, and treatments. We study how health can be improved through food and nutrition and how diseases can be tackled by understanding their fundamental molecular mechanisms. Our researchers work in human cancer and genetic diseases, in infections caused by bacteria, fungi, viruses, and parasites, and in how global health and disease will be affected by global warming and climate change.

We recognize that the only way to tackle the problems we face as a society is to take an interdisciplinary approach to our research. This means we have expertise in broad areas including molecular biology, biochemistry, bioinformatics, genomics, transcriptomics, modelling, bioanalytical chemistry, proteomics, metabolomics, microbiology, parasitology, and plant biology. We work internationally with researchers and partners in universities, charities, non-governmental organisations, industry, and government agencies to tackle local and global challenges.

Theme Leads: Dr Linda Oyama (l.oyama@qub.ac.uk), Dr Mark Robinson (mark.robinson@qub.ac.uk)

- **Sustaining Ecosystems and Biodiversity**

This theme covers research in biodiversity and ecosystem services for environments ranging from tropical forests to deep oceans, using field techniques and skills such as wildlife tracking, taxonomy, geostatistics, molecular and genetic ecology, environmental microbiology, microbial ecology, food web analysis, microcosm and mesocosm experiments, and mathematical/computational methods. Within this theme we also study the behaviour and temperament of wild, agricultural or domestic animals and their implications for welfare and ability to respond to environmental change.

Potential research projects include phylogenetic analysis of rare and newly discovered species, examination of ecological interactions in tropical systems, agricultural soils, or marine communities, using state-of-the-art genetic analysis, surveys using drones or satellite tagging, or experiments in tanks and field plots, including careful and ethical examinations of animal behaviour. Projects range from theoretical analysis of stability in ecosystems, through discovery of new species and mechanisms of interaction, or responses to climate change, to the assessment of agri-environment schemes, development of new methods for commercial fisheries management and economic evaluations of conservation measures. Projects very often have an international dimension and include collaboration with other researchers worldwide.

Theme Lead: Professor Chris Creevey (chris.creevey@qub.ac.uk), Dr Julianne Megaw (j.megaw@qub.ac.uk)

Institute for Global Food Security

The Institute for Global Food Security at Queen's University Belfast was founded in 2013 to provide a world-leading commitment to research in food security. The Institute is a key partner in national and global efforts to provide the world's growing population with a sustainable, safe and secure supply of high quality food. Increasingly, many aspects of our research are carried out in collaboration with world-leading colleagues and research centres in Europe, Asia and North America.

The research of the Institute falls within three grand challenges:

- **Farms for the Future**
- **Global Food Integrity**
- **Food, Nutrition and Health**

At a time when the world's population is growing at its fastest ever rate, food security is a major global challenge. The Institute for Global Food Security aims to play a major role in delivering safe, sustainable and authentic food to the world's population, and has become globally recognised for its excellence in research. Responsive, high-quality education is essential to ensure the agri-food sector remains innovative, sustainable and globally competitive. To secure this success, our teaching draws on excellence in areas as diverse as nutrition, diet and health, chemical engineering, biomedical sciences and biochemistry.

May 2022 saw the launch of the QUB-NML Centre of Excellence in Agriculture and Food Integrity. Based at the ASSET Technology Centre in the Biological Sciences building, the centre will provide an interdisciplinary environment for projects that develop innovations in scientific measurement to support the agri-food industry and supply chain by improving reliability, safety, and productivity. It will also educate and train current and future industry leaders in Northern Ireland, and the rest of the UK, with the specialist knowledge and skills needed for a fast-changing, competitive commercial landscape.

<https://www.qub.ac.uk/Research/GRI/TheInstituteforGlobalFoodSecurity/>



ATHENA SWAN

The School/Institute is committed to the Athena SWAN Charter and its underpinning beliefs. We are current recipients of a Gold Award in this area. To keep up with all recent developments with SWAN (Gender Equality to Enable Scientific Excellence), and to see some of the discussions that have arisen, please visit the School website:

<https://www.qub.ac.uk/schools/SchoolofBiologicalSciences/About/AthenaSWAN/>

Our current Athena SWAN Champions are Professor Lisa Connolly (l.connolly@qub.ac.uk) and Dr Paul Caplat (p.caplat@qub.ac.uk).



KEY CONTACTS

Professor Nigel Scollan
Interim Head of School
nigel.scollan@qub.ac.uk

Professor Gary Hardiman
Director of Research
g.hardiman@qub.ac.uk

Dr Gareth Arnott
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The School Reception Desk and General Office are located on the ground floor of the Biological Sciences building, 19 Chlorine Gardens, and are open for enquiries from 9 am to 5 pm, Monday to Friday.



USEFUL WEBLINKS

[Queen's Online](#)

[Information on Research section in Queen's Online](#)

[QSYS – Queen's Student Information System](#)

[Information and guidance on QSYS \(including information on recording meetings with supervisors\)](#)

[MyFuture](#)

[Information and guidance on MyFuture](#)

[Pure](#)

[Information and guidance on Pure](#)

(There is also a Pure workshop that can be accessed via MyFuture)

[Student-Supervisor Relationship Toolkit](#)

[Study Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes](#)

[Resource Library](#)

[Support Services](#)

[Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy](#)

[Student Cost of Living Hub](#)

[Accommodation](#)

[Graduate School](#)

[Immigration Support Service](#)

[Student Finance Framework](#)

[Faculty Research Ethics Committees](#)

[Vitae Researcher Development Framework \(External Website\)](#)

[Thesis Submission](#)

[Graduation](#)



SCHOOL/IGFS WEBSITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA

School of Biological Sciences

[School Website](#)

[X](#)

[Facebook](#)

Institute for Global Food Security

[IGFS Website](#)

[X](#)

[Facebook](#)