

Conditions of Registration for Postgraduate Research Students

2026/27

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Alternative Format

If you require these Conditions of Registration for Postgraduate Research Students 2026/2027 document in an alternative format please contact the Graduate School via email Graduate-School@open.ac.uk.

Summary

The Conditions of Registration set out the terms and conditions (“Conditions”) that apply to registration for postgraduate research qualifications studied with The Open University.

These Conditions set out the terms of the agreement between you and The Open University. They also reference other policies, procedures and guidance documents. The Open University regulations and codes of practice are listed in the [Related policies and legislation](#) section below.

Scope

What this policy covers

These Conditions of Registration apply to Students who register for postgraduate research qualifications and set out the terms of the agreement between you and The Open University, including your rights and obligations as a student.

These Conditions apply to your study starting in the academic year 2026/27 (which runs from 1 August 2026 to 31 July 2027).

What this policy does not cover

All other Students and Learners not covered by these Conditions should refer to the [Student Policies and Regulations website](#) to access the Conditions of Registration or Terms and Conditions that apply to them. If you need any help, please contact us using the details given in the [How to contact us](#) section.

Support and Information

How to contact us

For more information about registration, fees or to change or cancel your studies, please contact:

Research Degrees Team

The Open University

Walton Hall

Milton Keynes

MK7 6AA

<http://www.open.ac.uk/>

Phone +44 (0)1908 653 806

Email: Graduate-School@open.ac.uk

Bullying, Harassment & Sexual Misconduct

We are dedicated to fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment for everyone; for this reason, we do not tolerate bullying, harassment, or sexual misconduct. We are committed to investigating issues of concern and will take appropriate disciplinary actions when necessary to ensure that our students and staff feel safe and respected when working with one another.

Information, support tools and resources for students and staff are available through the webpage [Bullying, harassment & sexual misconduct: it's never OK](#). Through this page you can also report any concerns about bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct that you have experienced or have witnessed.

Reporting Bullying and Harassment

The Open University is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive environment where everyone feels safe and is treated with dignity and respect. Unlawful discrimination of any kind across The Open University will not be tolerated.

We encourage students, learners, visitors and staff to report incidents of assault, bullying harassment, hate crime or sexual harassment through [Report + Support](#). This platform also provides information about what you can do if you or someone you know experiences such incidents, and where you can find support.

Section A: Your Agreement to register as a Student

A1. The terms of the agreement

- a. These Conditions of Registration and the Offer Letter and any supplementary documentation referred to therein contain the terms of the agreement between us. They incorporate and are subject to the rules, regulations, policies and procedures which are made under the Charter and Statutes of The Open University and which are referred to in this document. Together, they set out the rights and responsibilities of each of us which will apply while you are a registered student. It is your responsibility to make sure that details on the Offer Letter are correct and keep us informed of any relevant changes.
- b. In addition, if you are registering for a qualification supported by a third party you may also be required to enter into a supplementary agreement. Any such agreement will form part of these Conditions and must be read in conjunction with them.
- c. In addition, If you are registering for a qualification which is offered under a partnership agreement between The Open University and another educational institution ('your Local Research Centre' e.g. an Affiliated Research Centre), some of the services and facilities provided to you under this agreement may be provided by the Local Research Centre on behalf of The Open University. The fee arrangements may also vary, but you will be told separately about the specific arrangements that will apply to you. You may also be required to enter into a supplementary agreement with The Open University and/or the Local Research Centre. Any agreement made under this provision with The Open University will form part of these Conditions and must be read in conjunction with them.

- d. The Offer Letter, the Conditions and the rules, regulations, policies and procedures which form part of it, and any supplementary agreement required under Condition A1b), A1c) contain the entire agreement between us. If, at any time, any Open University employees or agents have agreed anything inconsistent with the Conditions of Registration, the Conditions of Registration will always take priority, unless formally agreed in writing by The Open University.
- e. The Open University Research Committee acting on behalf of the Senate may change rules, regulations, policies and procedures in the circumstances set out in the [Research Degree Regulations](#). The Research Committee will give you reasonable notice of changes to the regulations and rules, and the date they take effect. Please refer to the Principles section of the Research Degree Regulations. These Conditions will incorporate and be subject to changes that take effect during the period for which these Conditions apply.
- f. It is your responsibility as a student to ensure that the qualification you are registering to study is recognised by the appropriate professional body or employer and/or country within which you intend to utilise that study.
- g. These Conditions, the Offer Letter, and The Open University rules, regulations, policies and procedures referred to herein shall be governed and interpreted in accordance with the laws of England and Wales and all disputes arising from these documents or in relation to them shall be subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the English courts.

A2. Requirement to disclose criminal convictions, legal restrictions, and conditions

A2.1 You are required to disclose any relevant, unspent criminal convictions either when you register to study with us, or at any point that you become subject to a criminal conviction during your studies. For more information on what this includes, how to tell us, how this may affect your studies, and how to access help or advice, please see [Section K](#).

A3. Additional conditions to comply with statutory responsibilities

- A3.1 The Open University may impose conditions or vary the terms on which you study and/or access services and facilities. Action may be taken if, in the opinion of The Open University, it is reasonably necessary to do so in order to comply with its duties to protect the health and safety of Students, staff, contractors and members of the public.
- A3.2 Conditions may be imposed or terms may be varied by The Open University in order to meet its duties with respect to the safeguarding of children, young persons and at risk or protected adults, under the [Equality Act 2010](#) for England, Scotland and Wales; Section 75 of the [Northern Ireland Act 1998](#) for Northern Ireland; or any other statutory duty or obligation.
- A3.3 To fulfil The Open University's Safeguarding duty (in line with our [Safeguarding Policy](#)) Open University employees or agents have a statutory obligation to disclose relevant information to the internal Safeguarding team or external parties (for example, Child and Adult Protection Services, or the emergency services).
- A3.4 In order to fulfil The Open University's Prevent duty in line with our [Prevent Principles](#)), Open University employees or agents have a statutory obligation to report concerns that a Student or staff member is at risk of being drawn into terrorism. Relevant information can be shared with our Prevent team or external parties for example the Police and Channel (a programme that supports people who are vulnerable to radicalisation).

A4. Registration requirements

- A4.1 The Offer of registration will come into effect when The Open University confirms formally (by sending you an offer letter by email) and has received an acceptance from you confirming your compliance with the terms and conditions of registration. You will be required to register in person, presenting original or certified copies of all documentation required, as detailed in your Offer Letter. International Students registering for the PhD by Distance Learning will need to present documents online and will not be

required to register in person. This constitutes the Registration Process. The Registration Agreement will come into force upon completion of the Registration Process.

A4.2 Your application to register as a Student of The Open University is subject to you satisfying to The Open University of the following:

- a. you have met the general requirements for registration set out in the [Research Degree Regulations](#).
- b. if applicable, you have met any requirements for registration for a qualification set out in the specific regulations governing your qualification;
- c. if applicable, you have entered into a supplementary agreement as required under [Section A1b\) or A1c\)](#) above;
- d. if applicable, you have disclosed any legal restrictions or conditions under [Section A2](#);
- e. you have paid the relevant fee or provided an approved payment method;
- f. you have met any additional residence requirements or provided required evidence and requested a waiver of the regulation regarding residency.
- g. You have provided satisfactory proof of identity.

A5. Intellectual property

A5.1 Intellectual property (IP) generated through research carried out at the university belongs to The Open University. It is a condition of registration that research students assign any IP arising from their research to the university, with the exceptions listed below.

A5.2 The Open University retains ownership of the following IP: Original inventions, design rights and copyright in all materials produced during the course of an Open University studentship or in work specifically assigned to a student. This includes written, broadcast and recorded work, computer programs, research information on Open University websites, iTunes, videos and any other forms of storage. Please note that copyright in software, databases, questionnaires and data collected is owned by The Open University and should not be included in papers or books where the IP is assigned to a publisher or other third party.

A5.3 Copyright in the following is owned by the student (and any co-authors): thesis, personal notes (excluding laboratory notes), books that are not part of a university course, journal articles, conference papers, presentations.

A5.4 Where research is sponsored by a third party, contractual arrangements must be in place to set out The Open University's position on research IP. Such arrangements might include third party ownership of IP arising from research, and therefore students must assign the IP to The Open University so that the university can comply with its contractual obligations.

A5.5 Further information relating to research IP is contained in [Research and Innovation Services, Intellectual Property Advice and Support pages](#).

A5.6 Students can contact the [RIS Commercial Operations Team](#) for advice and guidance relating to research IP.

A6. Residence requirements

A6.1 You will be eligible to register to study with us if you are resident in the UK as a UK citizen, or if you are a European citizen with Settlement or Pre-settlement status. You are also eligible to register with us if you are an overseas national on any of the following types of visa: Entrepreneur; Skilled worker; Spouse; Student Route or where a Local Affiliated Research Centre is the sponsor. Please note this is subject to change, please see UKVI website for [Guidance on applications for UK Student Route Visa](#).

A6.2 If you are currently resident in the UK on a visitor visa, student visitor visa or working holiday visa, which only allows a stay in the UK for up to six months, you will not be eligible to register.

A6.3 If you are an asylum seeker with restrictions on the length of your stay within the UK you may be required to supply additional evidence, as required by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) before you can study with us. The Open University is required to ensure that all Students studying with us have permission to do so. This means they may be required to submit additional evidence to verify your status in the UK. If you are unable to provide evidence that verifies your status we may be unable to accept your registration.

A6.4 If you are not resident in the UK you may only register:

- a. for those qualifications which permit overseas residency
- b. where you are registered through a Local Research Centre
- c. where you are in receipt of a residency waiver

A6.5 When you register, you must provide your home address. If you live outside of the UK, you should only provide us your work or care of (c/o) address if exceptional permission has been granted to do so. This allows The Open University to accurately determine the fee you are liable to pay, as outlined in our [Fee Rules/Fee Rules \(ARC\)](#). If you are unsure or would like to seek exceptional permission, please contact the Research Degrees Team in the Graduate School.

A7. Attendance / engagement requirements

A7.1 Attendance and engagement requirements whilst registered as a post graduate research student are provided in the [Research Degree Regulations](#) and the [Academic Engagement and Attendance Policy](#). Please see regulations RD 8.1 – 8.6 for students registered on an MPhil/PhD and regulations PD 7.1 - 7.2 for students registered on a Professional Doctorate.

A8. Personal information

A8.1 We keep records of your contact with us through email and OU Approved Systems and your participation in training activities which are also stored on OU Approved Systems.

A8.2 When you register to study with The Open University the personal information you have supplied or has been created as a result of your study will be used and processed in accordance with the [Student Privacy Notice](#). This may include using your personal information, together with the records we will keep of your participation in learning activities, to provide support to you in your studies.

A8.3 We use the information that we hold in our records to process your registration, to keep in touch with you, to support you in your studies and to provide services and facilities, so it is important that it is correct. It is your responsibility to keep your personal information up to date and to notify us without delay if you change your name, the country where you are resident or ordinarily resident, or any of your contact details. We may require you to provide satisfactory evidence of any change before our records will be updated. If you do not notify us of any changes or errors to your personal information this may affect your ability to continue studying with us in line with [Clause E2.1\(a\)](#). Further details of when this and any additional evidence may be required can be obtained from the Research Degrees Team in the Graduate School or seen in full in the [Student Privacy Notice](#).

A8.4 If you are awarded any qualification of The Open University, any certificate in respect of that qualification will be issued in the name that we hold in our records at the point when your qualification is conferred. A certificate will only be amended or reissued in a different name after the date your qualification is conferred if:

- a. an error was made by us when recording your personal details;
- b. a valid request is made under the Gender Recognition Act 2024 in conjunction with the [Gender Identity Policy and Guidance](#); or

- c. We approve an application for a change of name on public safety grounds. For more information, see the [Government's change of name guidance](#).

A9. Our rights to make changes

A9.1 The Research Degree Regulations and the Research Degree Handbooks set out the circumstances in which The Open University may make changes to regulations, your supervision or availability of programmes. The following paragraphs outline the circumstances in which The Open University may make changes to these terms or our educational services.

A9.2 Circumstances outside our control

A9.2.1 The Open University will take all reasonable steps to provide the support for your research degree. There may be circumstances outside of our control where we are unable to provide those services in full or in part for reasons such as failure of equipment, fire, flood, pandemic, terrorist acts, or industrial disputes. In addition, supervisors leaving The Open University (or a Local Research Centre) are beyond our control. Where those, or similar, circumstances arise we will minimise disruption so far as we are reasonably able to and, wherever practicable, will provide you with reasonable alternative arrangements to continue with your studies.

A9.2.2 In circumstances where The Open University is impacted by industrial disputes, we will always seek to mitigate any impact upon your student experience. When we are made aware of future industrial action, we will communicate with you to make you aware of any potential impact upon your studies and the support that is available to you. The Open University will work with staff and the Unions to seek a resolution to any such disputes.

A9.3 Short-term changes to learning, teaching and assessment arrangements

A9.3.1 The Open University may have to postpone, re-locate, re-structure or cancel supervisory meetings, forums, day schools, residential schools and other training sessions, assessments or examinations due to the occurrence of an event or circumstance beyond its reasonable control including, but not limited to, industrial action, whether on the part of The Open University's staff or otherwise, short notice absence of training, examiners or other staff, short notice unavailability of premises, facilities or materials. The Open University will make all reasonable efforts to inform you of any such changes as early as possible and to provide reasonable alternative arrangements wherever practicable to do so.

A9.4 Changes to Qualifications

A9.4.1 The Open University continually seeks to enhance its students' experience and ensure that programmes remain valid, relevant and current. The training sessions that are made available in future as part of your qualification will reflect those aims of The Open University and may therefore not include the same subject content, teaching or assessment methods as those available at the start of your qualification.

A9.4.2 In line with this aim, The Open University may make changes to the structure of its qualifications. These may include such matters as the balance between core, options and free choice components, the balance between coursework and examination or other forms and types of assessment, the order of study and rules for progression through the qualification, the requirements for attendance at or participation in specified learning activities.

A9.4.3 You may be given the option to continue your studies under the new structure or to carry on under the original structure, subject to the teach-out arrangements set out in any notice given.

A9.4.4 The notice period provided may be reduced if it is necessary to comply with the requirements of a professional, statutory or regulatory body or of any other body that accredits or validates the qualification.

A9.5 Withdrawal of Qualifications

A9.5.1 If you are registered for a qualification and The Open University has approved the withdrawal of that qualification, you will be given notice of the withdrawal and a reasonable opportunity to complete your study for it before it is withdrawn, subject to the continued availability of the required training. If the period for withdrawal is shorter than that of the qualification time limit, then the withdrawal date will override the qualification time limit.

A9.5.2 Except in the circumstances set out below, the minimum period of notice that you will be given will be sufficient for you to complete the qualification at a study intensity of half of the full-time equivalent rate assuming that you do not fail any component, suspend your registration or seek an extension.

A9.5.3 The notice period set out above may be reduced if it is necessary to comply with the requirements of a professional, statutory or regulatory body or of any other body that accredits or validates the qualification for the change to be made in a shorter period of time.

A9.5.4 You will normally be permitted to complete your qualification up to 12 months after the published withdrawal date if you are resubmitting your thesis.

A10. Your cancellation rights

A10.1 Under the [Consumer Contracts \(Information, Cancellation and Additional Charges\) Regulations 2013](#), you have a right to cancel your registration to study for a qualification, without giving any reason, within 14 calendar days of the date of completing the Registration Process. You will receive a full refund of any fees you have paid or a waiver of any fees you are liable to pay for that.

A10.2 If you wish to cancel this agreement, or make other changes to your study more than 14 calendar days after the date of completing the Registration Process you must follow the instructions in the [Research Degree Handbooks](#). Your eligibility for a fee refund or a fee credit is set out in the [Fee Rules/ Fee Rules \(ARC\)](#).

A10.3 Further information about cancelling or ending your registration, including the actions you must take to do so, can be found in this document in [Section E Ending your registration](#).

A11. Complaints and appeals

The Open University has a [Student Complaints and Appeals Procedure](#) and is a member of the Scheme of Independent Adjudication for Higher Education established by the Higher Education Act 2004.

The Open University also has a specific complaints procedure for complaints relating to [Welsh Language Standards](#).

A12. Student discipline

The Open University has a [Code of Practice for Student Discipline](#) and a [Code of Practice for Research](#). Any activity that falls short of the expectations outlined in The Open University's Code of Practice for Research will be dealt with via the Postgraduate Research Student [Plagiarism and Research Misconduct Policy](#). When you register to study with The Open University you agree to be bound by these codes.

A13. Fitness to Study

The Open University has a [Fitness to Study Policy](#) to support you if as a result of facing difficult circumstances during your studies, your behaviour affects the way you interact with The Open University community and raises concerns with us about your health, safety or wellbeing. When you register to study with The Open University you agree to engage with this Policy if requested by The Open University. If you do not engage with the process, we may follow the policy without your agreement.

Section B: Your fees

B1. Your agreement to pay tuition fees and other charges

B1.1 When you register as a Student of The Open University you agree that you will pay the tuition fees and other charges or costs which must be met in respect of your studies. The tuition fee you agree to pay is shown in your Offer Letter. By applying to study at The Open University and agreeing to these Conditions, you also expressly agree to pay any additional charges which may be due to The Open University in respect of your studies that are not covered by the annual registration fee.

B1.2 The annual registration fee does not cover all the materials you may need to complete your studies.

B1.3 If you are eligible to resubmit your thesis, you may be required to register for the period of resubmission and an additional resubmission fee will be payable.

B1.4 If your qualification includes a residential school, the fee will not cover the costs of accommodation, meals, travel or other facilities provided in connection with attendance at that residential school, whether they are provided by The Open University or otherwise, unless otherwise stated in the relevant Research Degrees Handbook.

B1.5 If you are a part time Student or a full time Student in receipt of a residency waiver the fee will not cover the costs of accommodation, meals, travel or other facilities provided in connection with attendance on campus (or other mutually agreed location) for face-to-face training, supervision, seminars etc.

B1.6 Payment of or arrangement to pay your fees must be in place before we will accept your registration. Prior to registration you will be provided with information about available payment methods. An annual fee is required, and it is the sole responsibility of the Student to ensure (where appropriate) if alternative methods of payment are required that they are in place before the anniversary of your registration.

The payment methods accepted by The Open University depending on offer made are:

- Internally funded by the faculty
- Sponsorship of Research Council DTP
- Externally funded by employer – Contract required
- Self-funded students invoiced directly- payable by Bank Transfer
- Payments paid by loan through Open University Student Budget Accounts Limited OUSBA arrangement
- Staff Fee Waiver to be provided to the Graduate School before annual re-registration.

B2. Your liability for fees

B2.1 When you register to study with The Open University you agree to pay the whole of the fee set out in your Offer Letter or registration confirmation. See [Fee Rules](#) for details of fees charged.

B2.2 You are normally required to have paid or secured an agreement to pay your fees by a payment method approved by us before we will accept your registration. However, The Open University may, at its discretion, accept your registration before your approved payment method such as a government grant, a student loan or payment by a sponsor has been secured. The exercise of this discretion will be conditional upon you having taken and/or agreeing to take all reasonable steps (as the case may be) to secure that payment method within a reasonable time. If you have not secured that payment within the reasonable time we have given you to do so, The Open University may cancel your registration as set out in [Section E2 The Open University's right to cancel your registration](#). You will be notified in advance if this is the case.

B2.3 If you are paying your fees using a loan via the Open University Student Budget Accounts Limited (OUSBA) you may remain liable to meet scheduled re-payments unless you have cancelled this agreement in circumstances that entitle you to a full fee refund. You must check the terms of your OUSBA agreement and seek advice from OUSBA Ltd if you need more clarification.

B2.4 You will become liable for annual fees each year you register, which includes externally funded, Staff Fee Waiver or any other method of payment. You will not be bound to pay fees in relation to future years' study until you register for those years.

B3. How we calculate your fees

B3.1 Your fees are calculated in accordance with our [Fee Rules](#), based on the information that you have given us about your intended research programme, your study mode whether it is full or part-time, whether you are ordinarily resident in the UK, the Republic of Ireland or elsewhere and, if you are ordinarily resident in the UK, whether this is in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales.

B3.2 You are responsible for ensuring that the information provided to us and used in your Offer Letter is correct. If any of your information is inaccurate you must inform us before completing your registration. If we have sent you an Offer Letter and it is in any way incorrect, **do not alter or sign it**. Please [contact us](#) to give us the correct information and we will send you a new Offer Letter.

B3.3 We reserve the right to check any information that you have given us and, if the checks show that a different fee should be paid, to recover the difference between the fee shown in the Offer Letter and the correct fee if higher. These checks may be made at any time, including after you have begun your study. We may share data with external agencies to check that the correct fee has been paid.

B4. Failure to pay fees and charges

B4.1 If you do not pay your fees or provide an approved payment method at the time of registration, we will not accept your registration unless paragraph [Clause B2.2 above \(“Your liability for fees”\)](#) applies.

B4.2 If you are permitted to register or enrol under Clause B2.2 (“Your liability for fees”) above and you fail to secure an approved payment method within the reasonable time we have given you to do so, The Open University may cancel your registration even if you have started studying. You will be given notice of our intention to cancel your registration and a final opportunity to secure the payment or to pay by a different method. If your registration is cancelled under this paragraph any part payment of fees you or a sponsor have already made will be refunded and any grant or loan in respect of part payment of fees will be cancelled.

B4.3 If you are intending to pay your fees with a means tested award from a UK funding authority but your award does not cover your fees in full, your registration will only be complete once the fee shortfall has been covered. We will only be able to confirm your registration to your funding authority (to allow any maintenance support you may be due to be released to you) when your registration is completed.

B4.4 If we have accepted your registration and, for any reason, the payment method we have accepted is cancelled or withdrawn we may cancel your registration even if you have started studying. You will be given notice of our intention to cancel your registration and a final opportunity to secure the payment or to pay by a different method.

B4.5 If your registration is cancelled under Clause B4.2 or B4.4 it will be reinstated in the following circumstances:

- a. if you contact us within 7 calendar days of the date of cancellation having secured an agreed payment method or if you provide payment by a different method; or

- b. if you contact us more than 7 calendar days after the date of cancellation having secured an agreed payment method or if you provide payment by a different method, and you agree to accept the potential impact any gap in your studies may have on your academic progress.

B4.6 If your registration is cancelled under Clause B4.2 or B4.4 you will remain personally liable to The Open University for all the fees which are due by the date of the cancellation. If you do not pay those fees you will be in debt to The Open University and The Open University may take action to recover that debt in line with our [Student Debt Policy](#).

B4.7 If you are required to pay any other charges in connection with your studies (for example the accommodation charge for a residential school) and you do not pay those charges when they become due you may not be provided with the services or facilities to which those charges relate. If, at our discretion, the services or facilities are provided and the charges remain unpaid, you will be in debt to us and The Open University may take action to recover that debt in line with our Student Debt Policy.

B5. Consequences of not paying fees or additional charges

B5.1 If you do not pay your outstanding fees or other charges, including any further fees and other charges that may fall due, we may take all reasonable steps including legal action to recover any fees and other charges which you have not paid, in line with our Student Debt Policy.

B5.2 If you are in debt to us for your fees, we will:

- a. Notify you of what action you may take, if appropriate, to limit any liability for further fees and other charges that may become due and give you a reasonable opportunity to take that action before any further liability is incurred;

- b. Notify you that you are in debt, the amount of the debt and how you may pay that debt and give you a reasonable opportunity to pay any outstanding fees or other charges before taking any further action against you.

B5.3 If you are in debt to us for your fees, you will only be permitted to undertake further study for which any further fees or charges may become due if you pay in advance or have another secured method of payment for those fees or charges, which we have accepted, and you discharge or make arrangements to discharge the debt.

B5.4 If at our discretion we continue to provide services or facilities or allow further registration to students who are in debt to us, we reserve the right to take the actions mentioned above at a later date.

Section C: Your research

C1. Registration

When you are registered on the programme shown in the Offer Letter:

- a. you will be provided with supervision, training and support as described in the online prospectus and in the Research Degree Handbooks;
- b. you agree to study for the qualification, submit documentation at the times and in the manner specified in the regulations and to attend examination(s).

C2. Assessment

C2.1 The Open University's [Research Degree Regulations](#) will apply to the assessment of your programme. We will apply our academic judgment to determine the extent (if any) to which the learning outcomes of the degree have been met.

C2.2 In accordance with the [Welsh Language Standards](#), and the [Assessment through the medium of Welsh policy](#), you may submit written work as part of an assessment in Welsh, and doing so will not mean that it will be treated less favourably.

C3. The Residential School element

C3.1 If your research degree includes a compulsory residential school element you must participate satisfactorily, as defined in the programme handbook.

C3.2 If you are attending a residential school in the UK and you require a visa to enter the UK; it is your responsibility to obtain the necessary [Short-term study visa](#). Please [contact us](#) to request a letter from the Research Degrees Team in the Graduate School to use in support of your application for a Short-term study visa. The standard Offer Letter will not suffice.

C4. Telling us about a disability

C4.1 If you have a disability that might affect your studies, we encourage you to tell us about it and provide any relevant information that we ask for. This will enable us to work with you to understand your needs, and to make any reasonable adjustments that may be required in line with our obligations under the [Equality Act 2010](#) (for England, Scotland and Wales), and both the [Disability Discrimination Act 1995 \(Amendment\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2004](#) and Section 75 of the [Northern Ireland Act 1998](#), or any other statutory duty or obligation.

C4.2 If you tell us about a disability, health condition, or additional support need, or if we become aware that you may have one, we may need to share that information with relevant members of Open University staff, or, where appropriate, with third parties who provide services on our behalf. This is to enable us to make reasonable adjustments and provide effective support. Information will be shared in accordance with our [Student Privacy Notice](#). For more information about disability support at The Open University please see our [Reasonable Adjustments Policy](#).

Section D: Your qualification

D1. Your declared qualification

Your declared qualification is shown in your Offer Letter. Subject to the time limits as stated in your Offer Letter and the Research Degree Regulations, we will provide you with the opportunity to study at the required level on the proviso that you make satisfactory academic progress.

Section E: Ending your registration

E1. Cancelling your registration

E1.1 To cancel your initial registration, you must inform The Open University of your decision in writing either by making a clear statement by letter or email. If you do not formally cancel your registration you will not be eligible for any fee refunds, even if you do not participate or cease to participate in the programme.

E1.2 You must follow agreed procedures in order to cancel your registration, as follows:

a. Cancelling your application before you are registered

If you want to cancel your application before you are registered, you should not proceed with your registration. If we have sent you an Offer Letter and you have not signed and returned the Acceptance of Offer, do not alter or sign this agreement. Please contact us to tell us and we will cancel your application.

b. Cancelling your qualification within 14 calendar days of registration

Under the Consumer Contracts (Information, Cancellation and Additional Charges) Regulations 2013, you have a right to cancel your registration, without giving any reason, within 14 calendar days of the date of completion of the Registration Process. If you do so, you will receive a full refund of any fees you have paid or a waiver of any fees you are liable to pay.

c. Cancelling your qualification more than 14 calendar days after registration

If you cancel this agreement after more than 14 days you must follow the guidance provided in the Research Degrees Handbooks. Your eligibility for a fee refund or a fee credit is set out in the [Fee Rules/ Fee Rules \(ARC\)](#)

E2. The Open University's right to terminate your registration

E2.1 The Open University may terminate your registration at any time if:

- a. we find that you have given us false or misleading information; or you do not keep your personal information up to date
- b. you fail to meet any academic or administrative requirements shown in the Research Degree Regulations or the Research Degree Handbooks (e.g. failure to make satisfactory academic progress);
- c. you fail to pay your tuition fees as set out in [Section B Your Fees](#) or are in debt to us in respect of tuition fees or other academic charges;
- d. you were required to make a supplementary agreement as referred to in [Condition A1c\) or A1d\)](#) and you have failed to complete such an agreement;
- e. you are unable to meet any conditions in a supplementary agreement that are specified as requirements for registration or continued registration;
- f. you break any of the conditions set out in this document (and any of the other rules and regulations referred to in it) or in any supplementary agreement;

- g. you are suspended, excluded or expelled from the Open University (or from a partner organisation) study as a result of a breach of the [Code of Practice for Student Discipline](#) or the [Code of Practice for Research](#), or any breach of restrictions placed on your access to study: or due to a voluntary or imposed study break following a Fitness to Study Stage 3 Case Conference Panel in accordance with the [Fitness to Study Policy](#);
- h. you fail to disclose any relevant, unspent, legal restrictions or conditions under [Section A2](#), in line with the Code of Practice for Student Discipline (Section 3, Warnings Cautions or Penalties);

Please note that we may also seek prosecution if you have supplied fraudulent information.

E2.2 If we terminate your registration you may not participate in any learning or assessment activities after the date of cancellation.

E2.3 If your registration is cancelled under paragraph E2.1b), E2.1d) or E2.1e) after the start date because you have not met the entry requirements or the regulatory requirements of the qualification, you may be entitled to a full or partial discretionary refund of the fees/fee waiver, unless this is due to default on your part. Please refer to the [Fee Rules/ Fee Rules \(ARC\)](#) for more information.

Section F: Computing

F1. Your Open University computing account

F1.1 We will provide you with a secure Open University computing account. It is your responsibility to keep your account secure and confidential.

F1.2 When you register with the Open University you must comply with our [Student Computing Policy](#) and [Student Social Media Policy](#).

F2. Keeping your account secure

F2.1 If you think that the security of your account has been compromised, you must notify the Open University Computing Helpdesk as soon as reasonably practicable by phoning +44 (0)1908 653972 or by emailing the [OU-Computing-Helpdesk](#) or using [webchat](#).

F2.2 If you do not comply with Clause F2.1 you may be liable for any fraudulent transactions relating to your registration.

F2.3 If you do not comply with Clause F2.1, you may be held responsible for any fraudulent activity where someone else accesses your account, either because they have been given your sign-on credentials or have obtained your sign-on credentials by other means and you haven't informed us.

F3. Sharing information in online activities

When you participate in any study-related activities online, your name, preferred email address, your Open University Computer Usernames (OUCU), and the content you contribute may be displayed online to students and Open University staff, who have a need to see the information concerned.

F4. The Computing Policy and Social Media Policy

When you register to study with The Open University you agree to comply with the [Student Computing Policy](#) and [Student Social Media Policy](#).

Section G: How we will communicate with you

G1. By email

G1.1 Upon registration you will be provided with an Open University email address, which we will use to correspond with you. Please ensure that you use this email address in all correspondence. This email address is used as the username for the PGR Manager student system. No other email address can be used for this operation.

G1.2 We will communicate with you through your Open University email account, through the Graduate School Network and other Open University websites. It is your responsibility to check for messages regularly. Please note we will only contact you on your assigned @open.ac.uk email account.

G2. Through 'The Graduate School Network'

Your Open University computing account will include access to a personalised Open University website called '[The Graduate School Network](#)' and it will provide you with access to some forms, guidance and a range of other resources that will support your studies. We will also use the Graduate School Network to post messages that will be relevant to you, and may not be provided by any other media. It is your responsibility to check the Graduate School Network regularly.

G3. Through Open University websites

Your Open University studies will also provide you with access to qualification websites where available. These websites will provide access to training materials and other programme resources and may be used to post messages about your qualification that may not be provided by any other media. It is your responsibility to check your qualification website regularly.

G4. Recording telephone calls

We may monitor and record phone calls between you and us to make sure that we have carried out your instructions correctly and to help us improve our services through staff training.

Section H: Using Library facilities

When you use the Open University Library services, you will be bound by our [Copyright Regulations](#) which you will be asked to agree to when you first use those services.

Section I: Indemnity Insurance

The Open University has indemnity insurance for directly registered PGR students carrying out research related to their studies. If you are registered through a Local Research Centre it is your responsibility to ensure that you are covered by their indemnity insurance.

Section J: Affiliation with third party organisations

- J1. Any affiliation or promotion of The Open University must be initiated by The Open University.
- J2. You are not permitted to promote anything for payment or other remuneration purposes on behalf of The Open University
- J3. You should not promote any product or service via our computing services for which you are paid either financially or in kind.
- J4. You are not permitted to promote your views as representing or on behalf of The Open University.
- J5. Use of our logo, shield or crest must be limited to presenting, publishing or sharing research undertaken as part of your OU degree. Any other use must only be with prior consent from us and demonstrating a legitimate reason to do so.
- J6. You are free to express their political, religious, social and academic views both in private and in public provided that this is explicitly done in your own name and not in the name of The Open University. By registering to study with The Open University you are agreeing to abide by the [Student Social Media Policy](#) as outlined in [Clause F4](#) and with the [Code of Practice of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom](#).
- J7. If you are approached by a third-party organisation to represent The Open University, you should refer the third-party organisation to contact us directly with their request.

J8. Any failure to meet Clauses J2-J6 could be treated as a breach of the [Code of Practice for Student Discipline](#).

Section K: What you need to tell us

K1. Disclosure

K1.1 You must disclose any unspent criminal convictions when you Register to study with The Open University. Relevant unspent convictions include, but are not limited to:

- a. Offences listed in the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (in the United Kingdom; or equivalent Act outside of the United Kingdom);
- b. Any kind of violence including (but not limited to) threatening behaviour, offences concerning the intention to harm, or offences which resulted in actual bodily harm;
- c. Offences listed in the Terrorism Act 2006 (in the United Kingdom; or equivalent Act for outside of the United Kingdom);
- d. The unlawful supply of controlled drugs or substances where the conviction concerns commercial drug dealing or trafficking;
- e. Offences involving firearms, weapons, crossbows, and knives;
- f. Offences involving arson;
- g. Fraud;
- h. Offences of human trafficking, slavery, and forced labour;
- i. Offences related to any person under 18 considered a child under English law, for a definition see Children Act 2004.

K1.2 You must also tell us if you are currently or become subject to any licence, order, condition, or restriction imposed by a court or Criminal Justice Agency which may prevent you from fully engaging with your course and the wider Open University community. This includes:

- Sex Offender Registration and Sexual Harm Prevention Orders (in the United Kingdom; or equivalent Orders outside of the United Kingdom).
- Restrictions that limit your contact or association with children and young people (for example, individuals under the age of 16 or under the age of 18).
- Supervision, monitoring, or conditions imposed by counter-terrorism agencies.
- Slavery and Trafficking Prevention Orders or Risk Orders.

K1.3 You are not required to disclose a conviction that is spent. If you are unsure whether your conviction is unspent and therefore needs to be disclosed, you can seek advice from the Disclosures Team.

K1.4 To disclose any unspent criminal convictions, please refer to the [Procedure for supporting students subject to legal licence, restriction, condition or orders](#).

K2. What happens after disclosure

K2.1 Disclosure will not result in an automatic cancellation of registration or exclusion from The Open University. However, it may mean we need to place specific conditions or restrictions on your study, for example, exclusion from Open University online activity and/or face-to-face events.

K2.2 The information you provide will be referred to our Student Risk Check Team who manage disclosures. The Student Risk Check Team will complete an assessment to determine if there is any risk of harm to the wider Open University community and will agree any adjustments we need to make to your programme of study to mitigate any identified risks.

K2.3 Cancellation of your registration may be necessary if restrictions on your study are impractical for a research degree.

K3. Failure to disclose

If you fail to disclose information regarding relevant, unspent criminal convictions that you are subject to or become subject to during your studies, you will have breached these Conditions. We may take action under the [Code of Practice for Student Discipline](#) (Sections 2.4.4c and 2.4.5a) which could affect your continued study with us (see Section E2: The Open University's right to cancel your registration or enrolment).

K4. Support and Confidentiality

K4.1 All records and correspondence relating to your disclosure will be stored securely in line with our [Student Privacy Notice](#). Your consent will always be obtained before seeking further information about any disclosure from third parties.

K4.2 Any disclosure made to us during use of one of our services (such as careers advice) will be dealt with confidentially, and you will only be asked for the information relevant to the service you require.

For further guidance on disclosures, please refer to our [Supporting Students in Secure Environments](#) webpages or contact the [Disclosures Team](#).

Definitions

Case Conference Panel

A Case Conference Panel is convened at Stage 3 of the Fitness to Study process to review your case where there are continuing concerns about your health, safety and wellbeing, or about your behaviours, which have not been fully resolved at an earlier Stage.

Conferred

When the award of the qualification has been formally ratified at a meeting of congregation (Council and Senate), following which the formal certificate is issued.

Declared Qualification

A declared qualification that you have told us that you are studying towards.

Postgraduate Research Student (PGR)

A student who is registered for a post graduate research degree.

Registration

The process by which you become a student of the University. Subject to these conditions you may register for a qualification.

Registered Qualification

A qualification that you have formally registered to study.

Registration Process

The process by which your registration with The Open University is finalised. It requires the presentation in person of original or certified copies of all of the documentations required as detailed in your offer letter.

Us/We/Our

Refers to The Open University.

Related Policies and Legislation

- [Academic Engagement and Attendance Policy](#)
- [Assessment through the medium of Welsh Policy](#)
- [Code of Practice for Student Discipline](#)
- [Code of Practice for Research](#)
- [Complaints and Appeals Procedure](#)
- [Fee Rules Affiliated Research Centres](#)
- [Fitness to Study Policy](#)
- [Forms and Guidance – Graduate School Network \(open.ac.uk\)](#)
- [Intellectual Property Advice and Support](#)

- [Plagiarism and Research Misconduct Policy](#)
- [Research Degree Fee Rules](#)
- [Research Degree Handbooks](#)
- [Research Degree Regulations](#)
- [Student Computing Policy](#)
- [Student Privacy Notice](#)
- [Student Protection Plan](#)
- [Student Social Media Policy](#)
- [Children Act 2004](#)
- [Consumer Contracts \(Information, Cancellation and Additional Charges\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [Disability Discrimination Act 1995](#) for Northern Ireland
- [Equality Act 2010](#) in England, Scotland and Wales
- [Sexual Offences Act 2003](#)
- [Terrorism Act 2006](#)

Welsh Language Standards

The Open University is one of several universities named in the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. This means that any students in Wales can expect to receive certain services from the OU in Welsh. These are outlined in what's called the [OU's Welsh language standards](#), [Safonau'r Gymraeg \(Welsh Language Standards\)](#).

Safe Space Reporting

The Open University is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive environment in which everyone feels safe and is treated with dignity and respect. Unlawful discrimination of any kind across The Open University will not be tolerated. Safe Space Reporting is available through [the Safe Space online tool](#) through which staff, students, learners and visitors are encouraged to report incidents of assault, bullying, harassment, hate crime, or sexual harassment. It also provides information about what you can do if these incidents happen to you, or to someone you know, and where you can find support.

The Open University Student Charter Values

The [Student Charter](#) was developed jointly by The Open University and the OU Students Association. It is a declaration of our shared values and the commitments we make to each other. This document has been developed with the Student Charter values as its foundation.

The Open University commitment to Equality Diversity and Inclusion

Our commitment to equality and inclusion is embedded in all that we do and reflects our mission to be open to people, places, methods and ideas. We celebrate diversity and the strengths that it brings, whilst challenging under-representation and differences in outcomes within our institution. We promote and manage equality and diversity to meet both our strategic goals and our statutory equality duties. We achieve this in many ways, including the development of inclusive policy.

Give Us Your Feedback

If you have any comments about this policy document and how it might be improved, please share this with us, by emailing Graduate-School@open.ac.uk

Charity Statement

The Open University is incorporated by Royal Charter (RC 000391), an exempt charity in England and Wales and a charity registered in Scotland (SC 038302). The Open University is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority in relation to its secondary activity of credit broking.

About this Document

Summary of Significant Changes since last version

There are several significant changes from the previous version of this document ([Conditions of Registration PGR Students \(Postgraduate Research\) 2025-26](#)). These are:

- a. General restructuring of the document and refreshing links to contacts and policies. Where possible this is to bring the formatting in line with taught policy best practice in policy formatting and wording.
- b. New Clause A4.1 added to confirm you must provide satisfactory proof of your identity. Also added to the same clause that International PhD students learning at a distance do not need to present documents for registration in person.
- c. Clause A8.4 list amended to clarify when changes will be made to certificates that have already been issued.
- d. New Clause C4.1 and C4.2 added to clarify how information may be shared in response to us being made aware of a disability, health condition, or additional support need. Signposting to the new Student Reasonable Adjustments Policy included.
- e. Clause K1.2 list expanded to include further examples of orders and restrictions.

Policies Superseded by this Document

This Conditions of Registration for Postgraduate Research Students 2026/2027 supersedes the Conditions of Registration 2025/26

Document Information

Version number 1.0

Approved by Research Degrees Committee

Effective from 1 August 2026

Date for review April 2027

Appendix 1

Ap 1. Data Protection

Ap 1.1 All records and correspondence relating to your disclosure will be securely stored in accordance with The Open University's Student Privacy Notice (and Supplementary Privacy Notices if relevant to your circumstance).

Ap 1.2 Any disclosure to utilise a service (for example careers advice) is dealt with confidentially, and you will only be asked for the information relevant to the service you require.

Ap 1.3 Your consent will always be obtained before seeking further information about any disclosure from third parties.

Ap 2. Additional conditions for Students who are in prison

The following additional Conditions of Registration are applicable to Students who are in prison.

Ap 2.1 If you are a prisoner in England or Wales the Registration Agreement is subject to the Prison Services Instruction PSI 32/2012 (Open University, Higher Education and Distance Learning) or any other Prison Services Instruction which replaces, amends or supplements it. If you become a prisoner while you are registered for a qualification or enrolled for a module, this agreement will become subject to that Instruction from the date on which you are imprisoned. You may not register for a qualification or enrol for modules or remain registered for a qualification or enrolled for modules except as permitted under the Instruction currently in force. Details of qualifications and modules that are available for study by prisoners under the Instruction will be provided in [The Open University Guide for Learners in Secure Environments](#).

Ap 2.2 If you are a prisoner in Scotland an application to register for a qualification or enrol for modules will only be accepted if made under the Scottish Prison Service Higher Education Access Scheme and this Registration Agreement is subject to the terms of that Scheme. If you become a prisoner while you are registered for a qualification or enrolled for a module this agreement will become subject to that Scheme from the date on which you are imprisoned. You may not register for a qualification or enrol for modules or remain registered for a qualification or enrolled for modules except as permitted under the Scheme currently in force.

Details of qualifications and modules that are available for study by prisoners under the Instruction will be provided in [The Open University Guide for Learners in Secure Environments](#).

Ap2.3 If you are a prisoner in Northern Ireland this Registration Agreement is subject to The Open University Northern Ireland Prison Service Scheme. If you become a prisoner while you are registered for a qualification or enrolled for a module this agreement will become subject to that Scheme from the date on which you are imprisoned. You may not register for a qualification or enrol for modules or remain registered for a qualification or enrolled for modules except as permitted under the Scheme currently in force. Details of qualifications and modules that are available for study by prisoners under the Scheme will be provided in [The Open University Guide for Learners in Secure Environments](#).

Ap 2.4 If you are a prisoner in the Republic of Ireland this Registration Agreement is subject to The Open University Irish Prison Service Scheme. If you become a prisoner while you are registered for a qualification or enrolled for a module this agreement will become subject to that Scheme from the date on which you are imprisoned. You may not register for a qualification or enrol for modules or remain registered for a qualification or enrolled for modules except as permitted under the Scheme currently in force. Details of qualifications and modules that are available for study by prisoners under the Scheme will be provided in [The Open University Guide for Learners in Secure Environments](#).

Ap 2.5 If you are a prisoner outside the United Kingdom or the Republic of Ireland you may not register or enrol to study with The Open University. If you become a prisoner outside the United Kingdom or Republic of Ireland while you are registered for a qualification or enrolled for a module, your registration and enrolment will be cancelled with effect from the date on which you are imprisoned.