

Department of International Politics

Research Students Handbook 2019–20

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Department of International Politics. We very much hope that you will enjoy your time here; we want to make it as successful and rewarding as possible.

The purpose of this handbook is to inform you about:

- The Department, and the place of Research Students within it
- The support that you can expect from us
- Various important departmental procedures and regulations

All the information here is also available on the Department's website:
www.aber.ac.uk/en/interpol

1. THE DEPARTMENT

The Department is one of the leaders in its field in Europe and has about 22 academic staff.

The current Interim Head of Department is **Dr Patrick Finney**, who leads a small Management Team, each of whom has a specific area of responsibility. The current Management Team is:

Dr Patrick Finney (Interim Head of Department)

Prof Milja Kurki (Director of Research)

Dr Elin Royles (Director of Undergraduate Studies)

Dr Alistair Shepherd (Director of Admissions and External Affairs)

Dr Andrew Davenport (Director of Graduate Studies)

Dr Huw Lewis (Director of Welsh Medium Studies)

Who You Need to Know

Director of Graduate Studies (Dr Andrew Davenport; acd11@aber.ac.uk): The Director of Graduate Studies is responsible for all graduate students in the department.

Academic Operations Officer (Michael Roberts; rprstaff@aber.ac.uk): The Academic Operations Officers are the first point of contact for PhD students – they can answer most queries and can direct students to other members of staff where appropriate. They can be contacted via email or when the Departmental Office is open (weekdays between 10am and 4pm).

Aberystwyth University Graduate School (<http://www.aber.ac.uk/postgrads/en/>): The University Graduate School is responsible for the provision of postgraduate training within the institution as a whole, and runs the University's Research Training programme.

Keeping in Touch

The Department uses e-mail as a primary means of communicating with students. Please check your university e-mail account daily.

We may also distribute information via paper notices, internal mail or the Department website. Please familiarise yourself with the location of Notice Boards and the PhD pigeonholes, and check these regularly.

In certain circumstances we may write to your Aberystwyth address (or home address during vacation time). Please ensure that we have your correct addresses and mobile phone number. If you wish to amend your details, visit the University website, choose 'student record' and amend as necessary: <http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/student/>.

Important Note: Research students are normally expected to be resident in Aberystwyth or nearby throughout the period of their registration. If you need to be away from Aberystwyth for more than three weeks, you should complete an Absence Form (available from the Academic Operations Officer), please see blackboard PG Information: <https://blackboard.aber.ac.uk> and obtain the approval of the Director of Graduate Studies. You should also check in with the Academic Operations Officer when you return to Aberystwyth.

For Tier 4 students' supervisory arrangements and taking leave during the summer vacation, please check the University web page. Further information is in the following link under 'How can I take authorised absence':

<http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/international/compliance-information/frequently-asked-questions/>

Please note that there are specific procedures to be followed and forms to be submitted before undertaking research-related travel for conferences and fieldwork. For details see Sections 18 and 19.

2. THE DEPARTMENT'S GRADUATE SCHOOL

The Department has a long history of supporting postgraduate study. Many of our PhD students have gone on to become internationally renowned academics in their own right; many others are highly successful in other walks of life.

One of the reasons for this success is the strong research culture that is a hallmark of the department. We hope that each of you will feel engaged by this, and soon take an active part in making this research culture even stronger. There are several ways that you can contribute:

- Attend the many public lectures and workshops put on by the Department during the year.
- Attend the weekly International Politics Research Seminars (IPRS), which feature presentations by guest speakers, staff from the department and our third-year PhD students. The programme will be sent by email early in the year and updates and reminders will be provided throughout the year, and posted here: <http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/interpol/research/international-politics-research-seminar/>
- Attend and participate in the Research Workshops that the department runs through the year for all research (PhD and MPhil) students. (You will receive information on these sessions early in the year.)
- Discuss your work with your fellow research students. Aberystwyth provides a unique environment for the fostering of a PhD community and you are strongly encouraged to take an active part in it.
- Get involved in some of the research groups and research centres in the department and across the university that put on regular specialist seminars. See the Departmental website under "Research" for a listing and further details.

There are also a number of groups and societies at University level that might be of interest for you. Please check the Students' Union website (<http://www.abersu.co.uk/>) for further information.

3. SUPERVISION

All research students (PhD and MPhil; full time and part time) are entitled to expect high quality supervision. The department takes supervision very seriously, and our procedures follow recommended practices.¹ The department also ensures that all members of staff receive regular training in supervision.

Each research student is allocated two supervisors. Usually, there is a designated Primary Supervisor and a Secondary Supervisor, but occasionally the two will be made Joint Supervisors. Supervision teams are chosen as far as possible for their expertise on a student's thesis topic. We monitor supervisory arrangements regularly to ensure that they are working well.

Primary Supervisor: A Primary Supervisor (PS) has several responsibilities:

- To maintain contact through regular supervisions, and be accessible to the student at other appropriate times; to give detailed advice on the necessary completion dates of successive stages of the thesis.
- To review students' written work and return such work with constructive criticism in a reasonable time.
- To give guidance about the nature of research and the standard expected, research planning, literature and sources, and useful research techniques, as well as to assess students' training needs.
- To make students aware of legal and ethical issues that may arise from their research subject or intended methodologies; to advise how to avoid problems such as plagiarism.
- To report in writing once a year (December or April) on the student's progress for the Departmental Research Monitoring Committee.
- To have overall responsibility for the student's Continuing Professional Development including (together with the Secondary Supervisor) arranging as appropriate for the student to talk about his/her work to staff or graduate seminars; and discussing participation in relevant conferences, workshops etc. in the wider community.
- To sign Tier 4 documents as requested by the student.

Secondary Supervisor: Secondary Supervisors have the following responsibilities:

- To attend the initial working meeting between the PS and the student, in which preliminary planning will take place.
- To attend at least one meeting every term between the PS and the student.
- To read chapters submitted by the student and commented upon by the PS.
- To assume the role of the PS if the PS is on sabbatical during the first two years of a research (PhD and MPhil) student's full-time registration.

¹ The department's supervision practices follow those recommended by the UK Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, the Economic and Social Research Council and the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

- To report in writing once a year (December or April) on the student's progress for the Departmental Research Monitoring Committee.

Joint Supervisors: Joint supervisors are appointed when a student's topic requires supervisors with expertise in quite different areas. Responsibility is shared, but when one supervisor is on sabbatical, the other takes full responsibility.

Supervision Meetings

The norm is for all students to meet their primary supervisor for one hour every three weeks (full-time) and four weeks (part-time) in term time. During vacation periods, meetings are likely to be less frequent, arranged as and when appropriate. Some flexibility can be permitted around these norms – for example, meetings may be less frequent, or shorter, when a student is working through some ideas and/or writing up a particular piece of work. Nonetheless, meetings should be regularly timetabled, and supervisors must regard these commitments as absolutely as they do seminars and lectures.

Students are expected to provide both supervisors with a short written record of what was discussed and decided at every meeting.

The Student/Supervisor Relationship

A good working relationship between supervisor and student is essential. The department's Research Monitoring Committee (RMC) will try to ensure that things proceed smoothly. However, problems do sometimes occur. If this does happen, for whatever reason, it is essential that the problem is brought to the attention of the Director of Graduate Studies, who will seek to resolve it as soon as possible.

Supervisors should aim to return written work (a chapter or part chapter) within three weeks of receiving it. However, students cannot expect this to happen for very long pieces of work, or at certain very busy times (e.g. in the middle of examination marking). Students should also note that supervisors have their own research to pursue, and this may take them far away from Aberystwyth outside term time. You should plan accordingly.

4. RESEARCH TRAINING

All full-time research students (PhD and MPhil) students in the department are required to successfully complete a programme of Research Training (RT). Research Training is intended to produce rounded social scientists, familiar with a range of different approaches to research and knowledgeable about the application of different research methods.

All full-time research students are required to complete the University's Postgraduate Induction Programme including the compulsory module PGM9005 Ethics, Plagiarism and Academic Practice for Research Students.

Full-time MPhil students are required to take an additional 10 credits of research training modules offered by the University, and the Department recommends PGM0210 Principles of Research Design.

Students are required to take 40 credits of research training modules. The Department recommends:

PGM2120 Research in Politics and International Studies (20 credits)

PGM1010 Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis (10 credits) – especially for ESRC funded students

PGM1710 Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis (10 credits)

The Department also very strongly advises students to take PGM0210 Principles of Research Design (10 credits). They will find of module to be of enormous benefit in thinking through the logic of their PhD project and working out how to organise it.

In the second year of the PhD, the Department also strongly recommends that students take PGM2910 Research Writing Programme and encourages them to consider taking one or more of the other 10 credit modules offered by the Graduate School (for example on grant writing or on public engagement and impact).

Students who have already completed a Research Training Master's degree or have equivalent professional experience may apply for an exemption from one or more of the compulsory research training modules by filling in an exemption form, available from the University's Graduate School website (see <http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/grad-school/forms/>). All requests for RT exemption should be made within the first two weeks of the student's registration.

Note: Students who have completed an RT Master's degree or receive exemptions based on professional experience should be aware that they will still be required to engage with research training during the first two years of their PhDs (usually by taking 20 credits' worth of RT modules during that period).

In addition to research training, the University's Graduate School runs a series of workshops during the course of the year aimed at developing researcher's skills across a variety of competencies. You are strongly encouraged to take advantage of these opportunities. Full information can be found here: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/grad-school/>

The following link provides information on the structure of the Aberystwyth University Researcher Development Programme: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/grad-school/researcher/>

5. RESEARCH MONITORING

The progress of all research (PhD and MPhil) students is monitored on a yearly basis. Monitoring is conducted by the department's Research Monitoring Committee (RMC). The RMC normally comprises the Director of Graduate Studies and the Director of Research.

Students and supervisors submit an annual research monitoring report, and complete a monitoring form by the end of April (for students who started in September) or the end of December (for students who started in January). Students are also interviewed by the RMC in May or January, depending on when they started. The RMC then reports to the Faculty of Arts and Social Scientists, and recommends whether a student be permitted to progress to the following year.

Please Note: Student Interviews with the RMC will be in **the week commencing MONDAY 18 May 2020**. All research (PhD and MPhil) students – except those whose absence on fieldwork has been approved in advance by the Director of Graduate Studies – must ensure they are available in Aberystwyth for monitoring during that week. Those who are away from Aberystwyth during that week should expect to have their research monitoring interview by telephone or Skype.

Student Progression

All research students should recognise that progression from one year to the next in your degree is **not** automatic. You must satisfy the RMC – and ultimately the Faculty and the University Graduate School – that you are working at an appropriate level, and producing sufficient work of a suitable standard, to be able to complete your degree within the required time frame.

Progression from Year One to Year Two

If the RMC is concerned that a PhD student is not making satisfactory progress by the end of the first year, the student will be notified of this after the spring research monitoring meetings and will be given a specific task to accomplish (usually a particular piece of writing to do) by the end of the summer in order to demonstrate that they are capable of producing work at the appropriate level. A decision on whether or not to permit the student to progress to year two will be made by the RMC by mid-September. In recent years, usually at least one of the Department's PhD students has gone through this process – some have produced work that has reassured the RMC and been permitted to continue, while others have not. Not permitting a student to progress is a difficult decision for everyone concerned, but the RMC must be confident that all the Department's PhD students are capable of producing a completed and passable thesis at the end of four years. It is therefore in everyone's long-term interests that the Department is strict about progression within the PhD programme.

To qualify for progression from Year One to Year Two a student must:

- Complete a satisfactory amount of written work of sufficient quality. We normally expect students to write about 10,000 words by the end of April of the first year and for this work to be of a standard commensurate with first-year doctoral research.
- Successfully complete any Research Training requirements.
- Successfully complete the First Year Graduate Research Workshop (see below).

Important Note: see Section 6 for requirements in regard to Research Ethics

Progression after Years Two and Three

Students continue to be research monitored throughout their time in the department. This includes annual interviews with the RMC. Second year students must also successfully complete the Second Year Graduate Research Workshop, while third year students must make a presentation to the International Politics Research Seminar (IPRS).

First Year Research Workshop

This will be held **in May 2020**. All Year One PhD and MPhil students **MUST** be in Aberystwyth to participate on these dates: this is not an optional event. **This event is compulsory for all first, second and third year PhDs and first year MPhil students to attend.**

Each student must give a presentation of no more than 15 minutes, which should demonstrate the development of their thesis during the first year. Following each presentation there will be 15 minutes for questions. The presentation should cover the following elements:

- What is your key research question?
- What are the key literature and main concepts/theories influencing the thesis?
- How might your research be able to contribute to understanding in your field of study?
- What methodology do you intend to employ? Are there potential problems with the application of this methodology?
- How do you envisage the research being conducted over the following 2-3 years (i.e. draft timetable) for PhD students, or how do you envisage the research being concluded over the writing up period for MPhil students?

The presentation is not meant to be an inquisition or an ordeal. The intention is to discuss your research work in a supportive atmosphere, and give you an opportunity to reflect upon your research.

A few suggestions regarding how to present effectively:

- Reading a paper is not the best way to present. Try to engage with, and speak to (rather than at) the audience.
- If you use PowerPoint, do not use more than 5 or 6 slides and make sure they are legible – use a large font and do not put too much text on each slide.
- Be aware of acoustics and voice projection.
- Don't try to say everything about your project (in 15 minutes, you can't!) and use the time efficiently; don't waste time on digressions from the main points.

Second Year Research Workshop

This will be held in **January 2020**. Second year PhD students will give presentations of 15 minutes on their thesis, and take questions. Students are expected to demonstrate significant progress on their thesis from the first year presentations. **This event is compulsory for all first, second and third year PhDs and first year MPhil students to attend.**

International Politics Research Seminar (IPRS)

Attendance at IPRS is **compulsory** for all first, second and third year PhD students and first year MPhil students. If there is a good reason why you cannot attend, you must ask Dr Andrew Davenport for permission to be absent.

All third year PhD students present their work to an IPRS session. The presentation should normally last no longer than 30 minutes, and should provide a lucid explanation of the aims of the thesis and (depending on the exact state of the thesis at the time of the IPRS) should normally give some indication of the findings of the research. IPRS presentations often work best when they are focussed around a key part of the thesis (for example, one or two chapters) rather than trying to provide an extended overview.

Student presentations will receive comments from a discussant who is a member of staff from outside the field of the PhD. To assist the discussant, the student should provide them with a copy of their presentation (or chapters on which the presentation will be based) at least 2 weeks before the IPRS.

6. ETHICS APPROVAL

All postgraduate research students must apply for and receive ethics approval in order to conduct their research.

Students are advised to familiarise themselves with the University's research ethics guidelines: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/rbi/staff-students/ethics/>. They should discuss the ethics implications of their projects with their supervisors at an early stage of their research.

Towards the end of the first year of full-time study (and before submitting the semester two research monitoring form), the research student is expected to apply for ethics approval for their project using the University's online application process, which can be accessed via the link in the paragraph above. Postgraduate research students should identify the Department's Director of Postgraduate Studies (Dr Andrew Davenport) as the person to review the application.

In most cases, where the project does not involve substantive ethical issues, applications can be approved very quickly.

However, in cases where there are important ethical considerations (usually, but not limited to, project involving human subjects) the project will need to be considered by the University's Ethics Panel. Students and their supervisors should discuss this in conjunction with the DGS. In these cases, it is often neither sensible nor feasible to apply for ethics approval in the first year. **However, by the time of Research Monitoring, students need to have demonstrated an active engagement with the ethics approval process and to have put a plan in place, together with their supervisors, to apply for ethics approval.**

Note also that additional approval may need to be requested subsequently if a project develops in a significantly different direction, especially if it involves using different methods (for example, requiring the student to conduct interviews or participant observation rather in addition to desk-based research).

It is essential to be aware that ethics approval is required before students can undertake fieldwork. It is not enough to conduct the fieldwork in an ethically appropriate way – it must be approved in advance by the university.

7. THE FOURTH YEAR

Although the Department encourages PhD students to organize their research and writing so that they can submit their theses as soon as possible after (or even within) their three-year registration period, most need to use some or all of the fourth year or “writing up period” for the final drafting, polishing and editing of the thesis. You need to plan carefully from the outset of your PhD studies for the fourth year. Here are some points to bear in mind as you think ahead to the final stage of the PhD:

Finances: The fourth year is usually not funded – that is, if you receive a Research Council, University or Departmental award, it will only cover the three-year registration period. Most other funders also will not continue to provide maintenance once the registration period ends. This means you should try to save some money during each of your funded years, and that you may need to get a part-time or even full-time job during the fourth year. In recent years the Department has employed some fourth years to do part-time teaching. Teaching opportunities depend on the Departmental budget, vary from year to year and can only provide a modest amount of income. Bear in mind that being employed in your fourth year is not a valid reason for applying for an extension – the University expects that fourth years will be employed and that they will be able to organise their time so that they are able to finish their PhDs in addition to fulfilling their work commitments.

Council Tax: If you are remaining in the UK for your fourth year, please be aware that you may be liable to pay Council Tax as you will not be regarded as being in full-time education. Students will not be registered as full-time candidates after the end of the third year but if it is confirmed that you are continuing to work full-time on the thesis during the fourth year then the University will provide certification (on request) that you are exempt from Council Tax. For further details see: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/aqro/students/pg-issues/research/council-tax/>

Location: Once your registration period finishes, you are no longer required to live in or near Aberystwyth or to attend IPRS. However, the Department strongly encourages fourth years to stay in Aberystwyth if they are able to do this, so that they are close to their supervisors and to the resources of the University and the research environment of the Department. Students who are considering being away from Aberystwyth during their fourth year should seek the advice of their supervisors at an early stage. Fourth years who are in Aberystwyth are very welcome to attend IPRS, first and second year presentations, research group meetings and other Departmental events.

Office space: Fourth years who stay in Aberystwyth can usually keep their office space in the Department. In the summer of your third year, you will be asked to inform the Academic Operations Officer whether you will be living in Aberystwyth in your fourth year.

Supervision: The final months of the PhD are a crucial time in the life cycle of a thesis, and it is important to keep in close contact with your supervisors, whether you are living in Aberystwyth or far away. If you are going to be away from Aberystwyth, be sure to discuss with your supervisors arrangements for keeping in contact – for example, sending them a short email message once a week keeps them informed about your progress, while more substantive discussions about draft chapters can be done in longer written comments, telephone or Skype meetings.

8. THE THESIS

A PhD is awarded in recognition of the successful completion of a scheme of further study and research. A PhD thesis must be judged to constitute an original contribution to learning, and to give evidence of systematic study and the ability to relate the results of such study to the general body of knowledge in the subject. The text of the thesis should not normally exceed 100,000 words in length (excluding appendices and genuine footnotes). There is no minimum length for a PhD thesis, but in the discipline of Politics and International Relations, it would be unusual for a successful thesis to be much shorter than 80,000 words.

9. SUBMISSION AND EXAMINATION

Submission

The final deadline for submission for full-time PhD students is four years after the start of their registration period (usually 30th September). If your registration period has included a period of temporary withdrawal or part-time status, you should check with the University Graduate School and the Academic Registry about the deadline for your final submission.

About three months prior to submission of your thesis, you should get an Intention to Submit Form from the Academic Operations Officers (or print a copy from the Academic Office website). Complete page 2 of this form (which asks for your contact details, thesis title and supervisors' names), sign it and give it to the Academic Operations Officer. The rest of the form can be completed by the DGS. Submitting this form late may delay your viva.

When you are ready to submit, get the relevant submission documents from the Academic Operations Officer. In addition to two bound copies of your thesis, you must also give them: i) Two copies of the notice of candidature form; and ii) A separate copy of your thesis summary (i.e. the Abstract). The Academic Operations Officer will forward the thesis, and all the relevant paperwork, to the Academic Registry.

The bound copy of your thesis should include the following introductory pages:

- i. Title page containing:
 - The full title (as on the Intention to Submit Form);
 - Candidate's full name;
 - Degree for which the work is being submitted, i.e. 'Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of PhD';
 - The Department (optional);
 - The Institution (Aberystwyth University);
 - The Year (e.g. 2019).
- ii. A declaration/statements page
- iii. A summary (abstract) of the thesis, not exceeding 300 words.
- iv. Contents Page
- v. Acknowledgements (optional)

Examination

All PhD students must defend their thesis in a viva examination. This is normally held in Aberystwyth. Ordinarily a viva will be scheduled within three months after submission.

The Examining Board for the Viva will comprise a Chair, the Internal Examiner and the External Examiner. The Chair is normally the Director of Graduate Studies, and is responsible for ensuring that the proceedings are properly conducted. The Internal Examiner is normally a member of the staff of the department with expertise in the area of your thesis. The External Examiner is a person with expertise in the subject of your thesis who is not a member of the staff at Aberystwyth. It must be someone who has not had previous connection with your research. Examiners are chosen by the Director of Graduate Studies in consultation with supervisors.

The Chair, Internal Examiner, External Examiner and candidate are normally the only people present at the oral examination. Supervisors may also attend with the agreement of the examiners and the candidate, but only as observers.

The Examiners will usually make a recommendation immediately after the oral examination, and inform you of that recommendation.

10. TEMPORARY WITHDRAWAL

Every successful PhD thesis is completed in the face of some obstacles and difficulties – the Department does not expect any of its research students to have a completely smooth and uneventful PhD experience. In some cases, however, a student facing very significant problems may benefit from a period of temporary withdrawal before resuming work on their PhD. If you believe that this may be the case for you, you should discuss the matter first with your supervisors and then with the Director of Graduate Studies. Please note that students can only withdraw temporarily during their registration period.

11. EXTENSION OF DEADLINE

All the Department's PhD recruitment, selection, supervision and monitoring procedures are designed to ensure that its research students submit their theses within four years of starting their registration. Occasionally, however, circumstances beyond anyone's control (such as bereavement, serious illness or injury) mean that it is not possible for a student to meet their deadline. Any PhD student who believes they have grounds for requesting an extension should first discuss this with their supervisors, then with the Director of Graduate Studies. Any request for an extension must be accompanied by written evidence and be supported by the Department. They should be submitted in good time before the end of the registration period, and are then considered by the Head of the University's Graduate School. It is important to note that requests for extensions must be properly evidenced and are not granted automatically.

12. PART-TIME STUDENTS

The normal registration period for part-time PhD students is five years (three years if the candidate has already completed a relevant Master's degree with research training).

As described by University Regulations article 6: 'A candidate must enroll at the University, pay the appropriate fee prescribed and pursue the scheme of research for the minimum period defined below:

Method C and D: five years, or fifteen terms, the first two years of which shall be regarded as the probationary year.'

Expectations for the first two years (how to successfully pass the probation) are:

1. Write one substantial chapter of about 10,000 words by the end of April in the second year of their registration
2. Present the research project at the First Year Graduate Research Workshop, in their second year of registration.
3. Successfully complete research-training requirements (if applicable).
4. Initiate the process of ethics approval for their project (see Section 6).

Supervision

Part-time students are allocated Primary and Secondary supervisors (or Joint supervisors where appropriate) (See Section 3 Supervision for full details). All PT research students are expected to have regular meetings with their supervisors, usually every four weeks. These can take place via Skype. Students are expected to write a brief summary of supervisory meetings as a short note or bullet points that must be emailed to the supervisors after each meeting.

First and Second Year presentations: These events are **compulsory** for all first, second and third year PhDs to attend. Part-time students are encouraged to attend, if possible. The dates for these events are First year presentations in **May 2020** and Second year presentations in **January 2020**.

Important note: An annual research monitoring report is written by each student and their supervisors, and considered by the RMC as part of the annual monitoring process of all research (PhD and MPhil, part-time and full-time) students.

Part-time students do not have access to office space and computer facilities.

See the University Graduate School's website for further information including codes of practice and the researcher development programme:

<https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/grad-school/>

13. MPHIL STUDENTS

As described by the AU Regulations for the Degree of Master of Philosophy, 'a candidate must enrol as either a full-time or a part-time student of the University, pay the appropriate fee prescribed and pursue the scheme for the minimum period defined below':

Minimum period: one year (**Methods A and B**) or two years (**Methods C, D and E**)

Notwithstanding the above, the Department may require a candidate to pursue research for longer than these minimum periods.

In order to allow for the examination to be completed, a one-year candidate may submit a thesis, at the earliest, two weeks before the expiry of the period of study. A two-year candidate may submit a thesis, at the earliest, six months before the expiry of the period of study, i.e. one and a half years from the date of initial registration. Tuition fees will nevertheless be liable for the full registration period.

Where an additional period of research is required of a candidate, the candidate's earliest submission date is extended by a period of time equal in length to the duration of the additional period of study.

Time Limits

A candidature shall lapse if a thesis is not submitted, in the form and manner prescribed by regulation, by the following time-limits:

(a) Methods A and B - three years from the official beginning of the candidate's period of study as a research student, as prescribed above.

(b) Methods C, D and E - four years from the official beginning of the candidate's period of study as a research student, as prescribed above.

The above time-limits may be extended by the University, but in exceptional cases only and in accordance with criteria laid down in the Regulations for the Submission and Examination of Research Degree Theses.

Supervision

All research students are allocated two supervisors. Usually, there is a designated Primary Supervisor and a Secondary Supervisor, but occasionally the two will be made Joint Supervisors. Supervision teams are chosen mainly for their expertise on a student's thesis topic. We monitor supervisory arrangements regularly to ensure that they are working well (see Section 3 Supervision for full details).

All students are expected to have regular meetings with their supervisors **every three weeks (full time) and four weeks (part time)**. Students are expected to write a brief summary of supervisory meetings as a short note or bullet points that must be emailed to the supervisors after each meeting.

Important note: An annual research monitoring report is written by each student and their supervisors, and considered by the RMC as part of the annual monitoring process of all research (PhD and MPhil, part-time and full-time) students.

Thesis Length and Submission

Every MPhil student's research shall be completed by the presentation of a thesis (normally not exceeding 60,000 words in length, excluding references and appendices) which embodies the results of the research, within the time limits specified.

A properly constituted Examining Board is required to conduct an oral examination of an MPhil candidate who submits a thesis for examination. This requirement might, however, be waived at the discretion of the Examining Board, when an examination of a re-submitted thesis is being conducted and the examiners are recommending a clear pass without amendments, or with only very minor corrections or amendments. In other, exceptional circumstances, a viva for a resubmission may be waived with the approval of the Examining Board and the Head of the Graduate School.

Candidates shall sign a declaration to certify that the work submitted has not been accepted in substance for any degree or award, and is not being submitted concurrently in candidature for any degree or other award. The signed declaration shall be included in all copies of the works submitted for examination.

The University shall ensure that the form of submission and examination of the thesis conform to the University's "Regulations for the Submission and Examination of Research Theses".

Departmental Research Students' Activities

First and Second Year presentations: These events are compulsory for all first, second and third year PhDs to attend and MPhil students will also be expected to attend (see above for First Year Graduate Workshop; Second Year Graduate Workshop).

International Politics Research Seminar (IPRS)

Attendance at IPRS is **compulsory** for all first, second and third year PhDs. All MPhil students are also expected to attend IPRS.

See the University Graduate School's website for further information including codes of practice and the researcher development programme:

<https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/grad-school/>

Upgrading from MPhil to PhD Registration

MPhil students who wish to upgrade to PhD registration should notify the Department of their intention as early as possible in the academic year and no later than the First Year Graduate Workshop in May. These requests will be considered as part of spring postgraduate research monitoring. The criteria for a successful upgrade are the same as those for first year PhD students to pass probation:

- Complete a satisfactory amount of written work of satisfactory quality. We normally expect students to write about 10,000 words by the end of April of the first year and for this work to be of a standard commensurate with first year doctoral research.
- Successfully complete any Research Training requirements.
- Successfully apply for and receive ethics approval for their project (see Section 18).
- Successfully complete the First Year Graduate Research Workshop.

In addition, MPhil students wishing to upgrade to a PhD must produce a research proposal that sets out how they intend to transform their MPhil project into a PhD project, explicitly addressing the issue of how the PhD version of this project would make an original contribution to knowledge. This proposal must be approved by the student's supervisors.

If the Departmental RMC concludes that an MPhil student has made progress equivalent to that of a satisfactory first year PhD student and that the MPhil student has a plan for turning the MPhil into a viable PhD project, the Department will recommend to the Institute and the Graduate School that the student be permitted to change their registration to enter year 2 of the PhD at the start of the following academic year.

14. FACILITIES

Facilities

The department aims to provide the best possible facilities and working environment for our research students.

The International Politics Building

The department moved into its current building in May 2006. This excellent building provides shared office space for all full-time research students. Computers/laptops can be connected directly to the University network from a student's desk space. The International Politics Building has a Wireless Internet facility. Telephones in research student offices can receive incoming calls and make free internal and external local calls (students wishing to make national or international calls must get prior authorisation from the Academic Registry Officer) The building also includes a graduate student common room and small kitchen on the lower ground floor.

Library Facilities

Library facilities for International Politics in Aberystwyth are perhaps the best anywhere in Europe. The University's Hugh Owen Library houses an excellent collection, with a Departmental collection dating back to 1919. These facilities are supplemented by the National Library of Wales, one of the UK's five copyright libraries, which is a Documentation Centre for the United Nations and the OSCE (Organisation on Security and Co-operation in Europe) and is next door to the campus. In the event that books are not available in either the University Library or the National Library, you can order them through Information Services Document Supply Service. To support research, the Document Supply Service is free up to a maximum of 10 requests per academic year for postgraduate research students. Should you reach your allocated number of free requests, you will be unable to submit more requests until you agree to the [charges](#).

Photocopying

The Department provides full-time research students with a free photocopying allowance of 2000 sheets per year. MPhil students have a free photocopying allowance of 1000 sheets per year. Graduates employed as part-time teaching staff receive additional free photocopying for copying teaching materials.

Professional Associations

The Department will pay the membership fee for **either** the *Political Studies Association* or the *British International Studies Association* for all full-time research students during their three years of registration. (The Academic Operations Officer has the relevant forms for completion.)

Conference and Fieldwork Support

Research students not in receipt of a full studentship award are eligible to apply for a departmental research grant of £150 each academic year. Students with awards from the ESRC/AHRC, Aberystwyth University, or the department have separate research funds linked to their award.

University and Departmental scholarship holders are asked to note that the research grants are limited to conference and field work: only travel, accommodation and conference fees will be covered. Students must supply original receipts to accompany all claims. They should also note (for the purpose of counting annual expenditure from such funds) that the University financial year runs from 1 August to 31 July.

Students can also apply for travel bursaries from the British International Studies Association (BISA). There are also research awards available from BISA to assist with fieldwork (details can be obtained from the Departmental Administrator). The Political Studies Association, the International Studies Association and other professional bodies also offer similar schemes of financial support.

Travel Insurance for Fieldtrips: please note detailed description of procedures to follow for research related travel in Section 19 below.

If you are traveling abroad please email insurance@aber.ac.uk with details of:

- Dates of travel
- Destination(s)
- Purpose of travel

For the latest advice for travelling abroad please visit:-

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>

[Travel Insurance Policy Details](#)

[The policy and guidance notes](#)

Please note that the University insurance for travel abroad is VERY BASIC and might not cover all sorts of costs that may incur when something unforeseen happens on fieldwork. Please read through the insurance document carefully and consider additional private insurance if necessary.

Information for ESRC Award Holders

Students holding an ESRC award should acquaint themselves with the ESRC's requirements, policies and procedures. See: <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/guidance/postgraduates/index.aspx>

ESRC award holders should also be aware that the ESRC awards Research Training Support Grants to pay for expenses which the supervisor/department deems to be in direct support of a student's research. The types of activities eligible for funding under the RTSG include conferences, summer schools, language training, purchase of equipment etc. See the ESRC Postgraduate Funding Guide for further details.

Wales Doctoral Training Partnership

Aberystwyth University is part of the Wales Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP), which brings together universities in Wales to collaborate in providing advanced research training for their research students in the social sciences. The Wales Doctoral Training Partnership is one of several such centres approved by the Economic and Social Research Council. The Department cooperates with other parts of the DTP to organise research training and workshops. For further information, see also the Wales DTP's website: <http://www.walesdtp.ac.uk/>

15. RESEARCH TRAVEL (INCLUDING CONFERENCES)

Many postgraduate research students will need to undertake research-related travel during the course of their studies, for example to attend conferences or workshops, to visit archives or conduct fieldwork. It is important that students follow the procedure described here before their research trips. **All research travel forms are available on the Blackboard site 'International Politics Postgraduate Information'.**

Before attending a conference in the UK:

- Discuss it with your supervisors and email the DGS to ask permission

Before attending a conference overseas:

- Discuss it with your supervisors and email the DGS to ask permission
- Fill in the Aberystwyth University Overseas Travel Risk Assessment Form
- Send this form to the DGS for approval
- Send this form (revised as required by the DGS) to inpstaff@aber.ac.uk AND travel@aber.ac.uk

Before conducting fieldwork in the UK:

- Discuss the fieldwork with your supervising, including confirming that the ethics approval for the project covers this fieldwork
- Email the DGS to ask permission
- Complete the Departmental Risk Assessment Form and the Departmental Change of Details Form (if away for more than three weeks)
- Send the forms to the DGS for approval
- Send the forms (revised as required by the DGS) to inpstaff@aber.ac.uk

Before conducting fieldwork overseas:

- Discuss the fieldwork with your supervisors, including confirming that the ethics approval for the project covers this fieldwork
- Email the DGS to ask permission
- Complete the Aberystwyth University Overseas Risk Assessment Form
- Complete the Departmental Travel Abroad Form
- Complete the Departmental Risk Assessment Form and the Departmental Change of Details Form (if away for more than three weeks)
- Send the forms to the DGS for approval
- Send the forms (revised as required by the DGS) to inpstaff@aber.ac.uk AND send the Aberystwyth University Overseas Risk Assessment Form to travel@aber.ac.uk

16. TEMPORARY PERIOD OF ABSENCE (if away more than three weeks)

Students who wish to be away from Aberystwyth for more than three weeks should complete the Research Students Change of Details Form. This will include their contact details whilst away and dates of absence. The form is to be signed by the student's supervisors and the Graduate Studies Committee and passed to the Academic Operations Officers. Students are asked to check in with the Academic Operations Officers on their return to Aberystwyth.

17. PART-TIME TEACHING STAFF (PTTS)

Each year the Department offers some teaching work on undergraduate modules to PhD students. Students who take up these opportunities are known as PTTS – Part-Time Teaching Staff. They work with a member of staff, the Module Convenor, teaching on a module, usually taking seminars. These are very important skills and career development opportunities, and it is strongly recommend that PhD students undertake some PTTS during their PhD study, especially if they want to pursue a career in academia: future employers will expect to see experience of teaching.

PhD students have much to gain from the experience of teaching. And, in turn, the department gains much from employing them. PTTS are consistently praised by our undergraduate students and our External Examiners.

PTTS are responsible for seminar teaching, seminar administration, marking, student advising, liaison within the teaching team, and attendance at examination boards.

All PhDs in the department are sent a form in the summer inviting them to apply for a part-time teaching post for the coming academic year; incoming PhDs are sent the forms once their places are confirmed. The forms ask for details of teaching experience (if any), teaching preferences (in terms of modules and hours), and planned absences from Aberystwyth that affect availability for teaching.

All new PTTS participate in a Departmental training programme, organised by the PTTS Officer and running through semester one. The programme covers:

- Departmental procedures and professional norms
- Seminar teaching
- Student welfare and advising
- Essay & Examination marking

18. PART-TIME RESEARCH STAFF (PTRS)

Every year the department advertises a small number of jobs to the PhD community through its Part-time Research Staff scheme. These positions are varied and can include assisting with the Department's crisis games or working with a research centre to provide administrative support. The offer of departmental PTRS positions can change from year to year, depending on the department's needs and budget. All PhD students can apply for these positions.

19. STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

The Department

We hope that your time in Aberystwyth will be happy and problem free. But sometimes problems do arise. If they do, the important thing is to make sure to seek help. Your first port of call should be your Supervisors, or the Director of Graduate Studies. With academic related problems, we can probably advise you ourselves. For other problems, we can listen sympathetically, and point you in the direction of more specialist help.

There is also a Staff-Graduate Consultative Committee, which meets once each semester and provides an opportunity for student representatives and staff to discuss problems and issues facing postgraduate students.

Student Support Services

The University Student Support Services are friendly and approachable. Working with you, they can achieve solutions for most of the challenges of student life. The team aim to offer student centred support that is responsive to your needs, and is confidential and non-judgemental.

Student Support Services are located in the Student Welcome Centre on Penglais Campus.

Tel: 01970 621761/622087

Email: student-support@aber.ac.uk

www.aber.ac.uk/en/student-support

Student Welcome Centre

The Student Welcome Centre is your one-stop shop for advice and information on a range of support services including, student finance and money management, disability and specific learning differences. Our Welcome Desk is your first port of call for general enquiries about support services and any complaints or concerns you may have and indeed, any compliments you may wish to make. All feedback is welcomed as this helps us to improve our University experience for all students. The desk is open Monday to Thursday, 9am–5pm and Friday, 9am–4pm.

Advice, Information and Money Service

The Student Advice, Information and Money Service provides information, advice, support and referral on a wide range of issues. If you are unsure about where to go for advice or assistance please contact us. No issue is too big or too small. Our service is confidential, non-judgemental and free of charge. We have a drop-in service (see website for details) or you can make an appointment with an adviser by contacting our Student Welcome Desk. The Student Advisers are accredited with The National Association of Student Money Advisers (NASMA) and are able to offer professional advice on money management or any issues with Student Finance. They can also give advice and guidance on any queries relating to accommodation, academic progress, University procedures or eligibility for hardship funds.

Signpost Mentoring

Signpost offers friendly, confidential, one-to-one advice on any aspect of university life. Signpost is a peer-mentoring scheme for all new students to help you achieve your potential, settle down in university life, plan for the future, and make the most of your time at university.

Accessibility Services

The University welcomes applications from disabled students and those with specific learning differences, and considers them on the same academic grounds as those for other candidates. We advise you to consider, before applying, the requirements of your chosen course, identifying any elements that might present particular difficulties. We recommend that you visit the University campus and your department of choice to investigate the support that may be available, explore facilities and discuss specific needs. Our Student Accessibility Advisers are happy to help before you apply. It is important that you contact your department and our advisers as early as possible as it may take time to arrange adjustments and organise support. We also recommend that you contact our Student Accessibility Advisers to discuss a study needs assessment and to get advice on grants, such as the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA). Our Advisers can arrange support workers, including for one-to-one study skills support, note-takers, mentors and library assistance. Individual examination arrangements may be available for students with a range of impairments including specific learning differences such as dyslexia and dyspraxia.

Resident Tutors

All halls of residences have a support network of Resident Tutors, who will contact you on your arrival to welcome you to your residential community. Their role is to help you settle in and make the most of your opportunities beyond the classroom and, where needed, enable you to access the entire range of support services within the University.

Student Wellbeing Service

The Student Wellbeing Service provides advice and guidance on a range of health matters, including emotional and sexual wellbeing, and includes our mental health, health promotion and counselling provision. Appointments are preferred, but not always necessary. The Student Wellbeing Service is in addition to, but not a substitute for, your own GP. Although we work closely with local GPs and hospital services to ensure that you get good care and attention when needed, it is important that you register with a local GP practice on arrival in Aberystwyth. We recommend you do this no later than 30th September. This is vitally important to ensure continuity of care especially if you are in receipt of any prescription medicine or other treatment. UK students should bring their National Health Medical Cards with them.

Information on how to register with a practice is available from the individual practices. Click here for contact details of local GP practices: <https://faqs.aber.ac.uk/#sss-gl-sw-hs>

Dental Services

The University does not offer a dental service. A range of dental practices is available locally, but many students find it more convenient to stay registered with their home dentist and arrange check-ups and treatment during the vacations.

Important Information:

Emergency Contact / Next of Kin

All students are required to provide details of someone who can be contacted in the event of an emergency. This information will only be used in an emergency. When you have activated your student account, please add your emergency contact details to your student record. Please ensure that the named person is aware and has agreed to give their details to the University in the event of an emergency.

20. UNIVERSITY STATEMENTS

Sexual and Racial Harassment

Policy on Sexual Harassment and Bullying:

Aberystwyth University has a very clear policy on harassment and bullying, which is strongly supported by the Department:

“Aberystwyth University is committed to promoting and maintaining an environment within which all students are treated with respect and dignity, free of unlawful discrimination, victimisation, bullying or any form of harassment.”

The University’s *Guidelines for Dealing with Harassment or Bullying* are sent to all students and can be found here: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/regulations/student-info/name-192019-en.html>.

Harassment and bullying: Definitions:

“23.2.1. Harassment, in general terms, may be defined as unwanted conduct affecting the dignity of individuals. It may be related to age, disability, gender assignment, race, religion or belief, sex (gender), sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, or any personal characteristic of the individual student. Harassment may be persistent or an isolated incident. The key is that the actions or comments – intentionally or otherwise – are viewed as demeaning and unacceptable by the recipient and would be regarded as harassment by any reasonable person.

Examples of harassment are provided in **Section 23.3** of the University’s Guidelines.

23.2.2. Bullying may be characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. As with other forms of harassment, there is no requirement to demonstrate the intention to bully.”

Signposts: Who to contact in cases of harassment and bullying:

Academic Staff can guide you to University policy and procedure on harassment and bullying, but particular people to contact are:

- your Academic Supervisor
- your Director of Graduate Studies
- your Head of Department
- your Residence Life Assistant or Campus Life Manager (if in Halls)
- the Student Advisers at the Students’ Union,
- the Student Advisers in the Advice, Information and Money Services (Student Support Services)

Procedures:

Please consult AU’s Guidelines, **Section 23.7** for a detailed explanation of procedures available for dealing with complaints under AU’s Policy.

Confidentiality:

“23.4: In order to protect and reassure those involved, all information concerning allegations of harassment will be treated in the strictest confidence. All parties involved in a complaint, including witnesses, should maintain the confidentiality of the process and any information or materials disclosed during the process.”

Academic Malpractice

Any activity which undermines the ability of fellow students to effectively pursue their education will be viewed with the utmost concern by the Department and will be subject to University disciplinary procedures.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is intellectual dishonesty. It is taken very seriously by the University. As a breach of the regulations on Unfair Practice, it is a disciplinary matter which can lead to severe penalties up to and including permanent exclusion from University.