

Setting Boundaries

Having clear boundaries can help us take better care of our mental and emotional wellbeing, by reducing stress and avoiding burnout.

As a PGR, there are a number of ways you can set healthy boundaries for yourself within your role in academia.

At Home

The coronavirus pandemic might mean you have abruptly moved from being primarily lab-, office- or field-based, to continuing to work on your research solely from home. You may now need to establish boundaries with those in your household who are now a part of your working environment. Thinking about the below can help you establish these boundaries:

Time: how much time would you like alone?

Behaviour: what would you like to be able to do comfortably in your own home?

Topic: is there anything you would like to avoid at home?

Space: how would you like to split your personal and communal spaces?

With your Research

It is important to set boundaries while you are completing your research degree, to navigate the stresses that will arise throughout the journey.

- Make a list of things in your life that you will not give up for your research
- Anticipate phases of your work that might affect your mental wellbeing
- Let go of ideas of perfectionism so you can reduce your tendency to procrastinate
- Take regular breaks and allow them to be entirely guilt-free



With Your Supervisor

Your supervisor can have a huge impact on the overall experience of your PhD. Setting boundaries is a crucial part of managing the relationship.

- Recognise it is not an employer/employee dynamic - supervisors are there to guide you, but at the end of the day, this is your project and it's up to you to direct it in the way you would like
- Engage proactively with your supervisor to address any problems if they do arise
- Keep communication within previously agreed restrictions
- Don't feel obligated to take on extra work that is outside of your remit



Maintaining Boundaries

- Be clear and assertive in **communicating** the boundaries you have established
- Be prepared for **conflict** and that you may need to re-establish the boundary
- Practice **self-compassion**: it is normal to feel anxiety and guilt when establishing boundaries
- Be **forgiving**: forgiveness helps us to let go of negative emotions and rebuild boundaries constructively



For more information on looking after your wellbeing check the wellbeing pages of PGR Life.

If you are struggling and need someone to talk to, the [University's Counselling Service](#) offer one on one same-day appointments remotely.