

Postgraduate Researcher Carers' Policy

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The University recognises that some Postgraduate Researchers (PGRs) have, or will take on, caring responsibilities, and wishes to support those PGRs balancing research and care. Providing care can place significant demands on the time, energy and emotional resources of PGR carers, and can cause disruption to home-life and research.
- 1.2 The University recognises that the roles and responsibilities of PGR carers can vary significantly, including the caring work that they do as well as the level of care that they provide. The University also recognises that caring situations can be unpredictable and can change over time and may be at short notice.
- 1.3 The University recognises that caring responsibilities may have no set timescale and may be short or long term, and each PGR carer's needs are unique and therefore need to be managed on an individual basis.
- 1.4 The University aims to provide a supportive environment and approach to the needs of PGR carers, including creating an environment in which PGR carers can openly discuss their specific circumstances and needs with staff, their supervisory team and wider University support services.
- 1.5 The University also recognises that PGR carers are under no obligation to inform staff / Supervisors of their caring status or responsibilities but notes that flexible approaches to research and wider support services may not be available to the PGR carer if their situation is not made known.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy is applicable to all PGRs at the University who have caring responsibilities (see 2.3) and to the University staff who support them.
- 2.2 This policy does not apply to those with childcare responsibilities (excluding when the child has significant long term illnesses and/or disabilities). PGRs with childcare responsibilities should refer to the policies within the [Code of Practice](#) and to the [PGR Parents Toolkit](#).
- 2.3 For the purpose of this policy, PGR carers are defined as PGRs responsible for the provision of regular unpaid practical and/or emotional support to an adult or child with an illness, disability, frailty, mental health problems or addiction. Carers do not need to be living with the cared-for person to be a carer.
- 2.4 This policy applies regardless of protected characteristic e.g. age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; marriage and civil partnership; race; religion and belief; sex; and sexual orientation.

2.5 PGR carers may struggle to identify themselves as such. The activities they may be undertaking on top of their research include, but are not limited to:

- Help with personal care
- Help with mobility
- Managing medication
- Practical household tasks
- Emotional support
- Attending medical appointments
- Help with financial matters or paperwork.

2.6 Challenges that PGR carers may therefore face include, but are not limited to:

- Unexpected situations which affect their ability to meet deadlines
- Availability to take part in group projects outside of their immediate research project
- Lateness due to unexpected events, doctors/hospital appointments etc.
- Being called away to help with an emergency situation
- Restrictions to engaging in wider research culture; time restrictions on extra-curricular activities, making friends
- Financial concerns or responsibility for managing finances
- Difficulties taking part in fieldwork and/or placements
- Difficulties with their own health as a result of caring responsibilities. For example, these might be physical problems, due to lifting the person they're caring for, or mental health related.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 It is the role of the Institution to:

- Ensure that all PGR Carers are accommodated as far as practicable to allow them to complete their programme of study on time without compromising academic standards.
- Ensure that appropriate advice/support is available to PGR carers through various support services.
- Ensure that relevant staff and PGRs are made aware of this policy and the further support services available.

3.2 PGR Carers are encouraged to:

- Familiarise themselves with this policy and other relevant [policies and procedures](#) in place to support them.
- Disclose to their Supervisor/s that they are a carer and, if they feel comfortable in doing so, the nature and scope of their caring responsibilities.¹

¹ If a PGR does not wish to disclose their carer status or responsibilities with their Supervisor they may choose to contact their Advisor, another member of staff or another University Support Service such as the Counselling service for confidential discussion / advice.

- To let their Supervisor(s) know of any changes to their caring responsibilities and if their caring responsibilities end so that support / agreed research patterns can be adjusted accordingly.
- Discuss and agree flexible research patterns with their Supervisor(s) to be reviewed at regular intervals and recorded in the University's online progression system.

3.3 Where PGRs have disclosed their caring responsibilities it the responsibility of PGR Supervisors to:²

- Respect the PGR's preferences around confidentiality in relation to their caring responsibilities.
- Familiarise themselves with this policy and other relevant [policies and procedures](#) in place to support PGRs.
- Seek confidential advice from colleagues or central support services with the University if they are unsure of how best to support the PGR.
- Discuss the PGR carer's specific needs with them empathetically, including any adjustments that may be required and ensure that PGR carers are aware of their leave entitlements, signposting them to the appropriate PGR policies (see section 4).
- Discuss and agree with the PGR any required flexible research pattern and record these in the University's progression monitoring system at regular intervals but at least annually (also refer to the [Supervision Policy for Postgraduate Research Degrees](#) and [Policy on the Progress and Review of Postgraduate Research Students](#)). Supervisors must give consideration to the PGR carers' ability to complete their degree on time and to the required academic standards.
- Signpost the PGR to further sources of internal and external support and advice (see section 6).

4. Holiday / Special Leave Allowance

4.1 PGR carers cannot always plan when they need to use their holiday allowance, special leave or take time away from their research. There may also be situations where PGR carers need to use holiday allowance or special leave at short notice, for example in an emergency or where other care arrangements have broken down and supervisors should be sympathetic to these facts.

4.2 PGRs can take up to eight weeks' holiday in each year (pro rata for parts of year and for part-time students). All [annual leave](#) taken should be discussed with and approved by the Supervisor(s).

4.3 PGR carers are entitled to an additional [5 days carers leave](#) (on top of their annual holiday allowance) due to unforeseen breakdown of care arrangements. This will enable PGRs to make arrangements for the provision of care for a dependent who is ill or injured; for example: where a child is unable to attend school/nursery due to sickness or in order to make urgent arrangements for the care of a parent. Special leave should be discussed with the Supervisor(s) at the earliest opportunity.

² In cases where a PGR Carer chooses not to talk to their Supervisor but to another trusted member of staff some of these responsibilities will fall to that staff member.

5. Change of Circumstances

- 5.1 A PGR carer who finds their research disrupted for more than 5 days (but less than 1 month) due to a change in their caring responsibilities should contact their Supervisor(s) and PGR support team as soon as possible so that local support and temporary accommodations can be put in place.³
- 5.2 A PGR carer who finds themselves unable to fully commit to their research (or unable to research at all) for a period longer than 1 month or for repeated periods of less than 1 month should discuss their options with their Supervisor(s) and their local PGR support team as soon as possible. Options include interruption, extension to programme or a change to mode of study e.g. from full-time to part-time (see the [Change of Circumstances](#) policy and procedures).

6. Additional Support

- 6.1 PGR carers can access support via the University [Counselling Service](#).
- 6.2 Where a PGR carer is finding their own physical or mental health impacted by their caring responsibilities, advice can be sought from [Occupational Health](#) and the [Disability Advisory and Support Service](#).
- 6.3 PGR carers can join the [University of Manchester Staff with Caring Responsibilities Peer Support Group](#).
- 6.4 If caring responsibilities are leading to financial hardship support might be available via the [Living Cost Support Fund](#).
- 6.5 PGRs registered on a CDT / DTP should check with their funder to see whether they have a budget to cover any additional caring expenses caused by attendance at compulsory activities e.g. employability placements or whole-cohort training events.
- 6.6 External advice and support is available through [Manchester Carers Centre](#) or the [Carers Trust](#).

³ Temporary accommodations might include (but are not limited to) adjusting local deadlines and re-scheduling supervision meetings.

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