

Policy for Sickness Absence for Postgraduate Research Students

(This policy applies to all registered Doctoral and MPhil students up to completion of their studies.)

1. If you are feeling unwell and will be absent you are expected to inform your Academic Supervisor and Academic Unit as soon as possible.
2. Where your illness prevents you from studying for **more than three working days and up to seven days**, you should self-certify and complete the 'Absence Request Form' in the [Student Portal](#) (to notify your Academic Supervisor and Academic Unit when you return to your studies).
3. Where your illness prevents you from studying for **more than seven working days**, you should obtain a medical fit note from your GP. You should complete the 'Absence Request Form' in the [Student Portal](#) as soon as possible and upload your doctor's note as evidence.
4. The Absence Request Form is also used for short absences other than for sickness, e.g. time away from the University for personal reasons and will also require evidence.
5. **Confidential Circumstances** - If you are reluctant for details of your illness to be made known, even to your Academic Supervisor, you can provide your Graduate School with a confidential letter in a sealed envelope for the Dean of Postgraduate Studies. This can be addressed as appropriate for the Dean's eyes only.
6. If you accumulate frequent short-term periods of absence over the course of a year due to a temporary or long-term health condition, mental health difficulty or disability, which is impacting adversely on your ability to attend, your Academic Unit may choose to support you under the Support to Study procedure on the recommendation of your supervisory team.
7. Periods of sickness absence of **more than one month** would normally be classed as an Interruption of Studies. You should inform the relevant Graduate School by applying for an interruption of studies through the PGR Code of Practice System (available at <https://postgrad.ncl.ac.uk/>) and uploading the medical certificate and/or any other evidence supporting the absence with your application.
8. Interruption of studies will not normally be granted for more than a maximum of twelve months.
9. A re-entry interview will be arranged for you on your return to studies with your PGR Director, if your sickness absence has been for more than two months.
10. If your return is supported by a Support to Study action plan, you should engage with the action plan and complete any required activities.

Stipend/maintenance payments during sickness absence

11. If you are receiving stipend payments from an external sponsor, it is your responsibility to inform the sponsor who will apply their own policy concerning stipend payments during periods of extended sickness absence (1 month or greater). Additionally, the University has a duty of responsibility to external

sponsors and may be required to inform your sponsor of significant periods of absence. Continuation of stipend payments during periods of sickness absence is solely the responsibility of the sponsor.

12. If you are receiving stipend payments administered through the University, including on behalf on an external sponsor, subject to any conditions imposed by an external sponsor, stipend payments will continue through the first three months of sickness. Stipend payments will normally cease after three months, but continuation of stipends may be considered on a case-by-case discretionary basis. Continuation of stipend payments during periods of sickness absence has no implication on the overall duration of the scholarship award; i.e. the scholarship will not be extended to take into account periods of sickness absence.