

Guidelines for research students wishing to take External Study Leave

Scope

1. These guidelines apply to students registered on the following research degrees:

- a. Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
- b. Master of Philosophy (MPhil)
- c. Doctor of Engineering (EngD)
- d. Doctor of Medicine by Research (MD(Res))

These guidelines do not apply to students registered on Master of Research (MRes) programmes.

Purpose and procedure for undertaking External Study Leave

2. External Study Leave is defined as being a period of time away from the university (minimum of two weeks) to undertake research which counts towards the degree registration. Ordinarily, this is either fieldwork or a placement, but also covers Split-PhDs that have been approved via the required university procedures. It will be recorded on the student record as an External Study Leave Milestone.
3. Before taking a period of external study leave, supervisors and students are advised to check the terms and conditions of the student's funding body which may stipulate restrictions on taking this type of leave and may impact on the stipend.
4. The use of an external study leave milestone is determined using the relevant External Study Leave request form (accessible via the [Student Administration webpage](#)) which must be completed by the department and submitted to Student Records.

Students with a Student Visa

5. For students under a Student Visa, there is an additional requirement for the supervisor to state how they intend to remain in contact with the student during the period of external study leave which must be approved by the Visa Compliance Team before the student starts. Departments must inform the Visa Compliance Team at least three weeks before the student plans to take External Study Leave.
6. Imperial is required to notify the Home Office immediately if a student on a Student Visa is studying for a period of time away from the university. This will be reported to the Home Office as a Change of Study Location but will not impact on their visa status in the UK.

Guidelines

Guidelines for research degree students wishing to take external study leave

Other considerations

7. In some circumstances a reduced (part-time) fee may be charged for the period the student is away from Imperial. This must be requested by the department/division and approved by the relevant Faculty Dean and should be for a minimum of three months.
8. Students studying for a Split PhD will have their period away from university recorded as an External Study Leave Milestone on or prior to enrolment at the beginning of the students' degree. Once again, departments must notify the Visa Compliance Team if this applies to a student who holds a Student Visa.
9. Students wishing to undertake a period of External Study Leave should discuss this with their department in the first instance. Guidance on placements can be provided by the Assistant Registrar (Placements) (student.placement@imperial.ac.uk). To contact Visa Compliance email visacompliance@imperial.ac.uk.

Interruptions of Study

10. A period of time away from Imperial to undertake activities which do not directly contribute towards the degree registration should be recorded as an interruption of studies using the category '*Alternative Research/Internships*'. For further information on interruptions of study please see the [Student-led Changes to Registration Status Procedure](#).

Document Control

Document title:	Guidelines for research students wishing to take External Study Leave		
Version:	2.1	Date:	December 2025
Location:	R:\7.Quality Assurance\3. Policy Framework\9. Research Programmes\Guidelines for External Study Leave		
Initially approved by and date:	N/A		
Version approved by and date:	N/A		
Version effective from:	December 2025		
Originator:	Registry		
Contact for queries:	Head of Student Records		
Cross References:	External Study Leave request forms		
Notes and latest changes:	Formatting changes made on 27/07/2016 Contact updates 08/07/2019 Updated to reflect terminology changes and new brand standard December 2025		