

UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER POLICY FOR VISITING RESEARCHERS, SCHOLARS, ACADEMICS AND RESEARCH STUDENTS

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Prepared by	Head of Research and Knowledge Exchange Office Research Governance Officer
Reviewed by	Research Committee Graduate School Board
Approved by	Research and Knowledge Exchange Steering Committee
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1	February 2014	Graduate School Board	Graduate School Board
2	March 2019	Graduate School Board	Graduate School Board (Noted by Research Committee 7 October 2019)

1. ACCESSIBILITY

We are committed to ensuring our websites and content is digitally accessible according to the Public Sector Bodies Accessibility Regulations (2018). This policy is published on our external website and the intranet; and can be requested in a range of formats e.g. Word, PDF, plain text, alternative formats such as large print or Braille.

2. POLICY OWNERSHIP, MONITORING AND REVIEW PROCESS

This policy will be reviewed at least every three years. The governance route for this policy is as follows: the Research Committee will consider the policy and recommend it to the Research and Knowledge Exchange Steering Committee for approval. The Graduate School and relevant teams in the Global Recruitment and Admissions and Marketing Communications (GRAMC) and People Culture and Wellbeing (PCW) departments will be consulted for feedback. The policy will be submitted to the Academic Council for information. Any changes made to it will be implemented as soon as they are approved by the Research and KE Steering Committee. The University will monitor the effectiveness of this policy through college-level reporting. This policy may be revoked with the approval of the RKE Steering Committee reporting to the Academic Council.

3. INTRODUCTION

- The University of Westminster's Visiting Researchers Policy sets out the principles and conditions under which visiting researchers may be hosted by the University of Westminster. For the purposes of this policy, a visiting researcher is an external individual whose primary purpose is to engage in research activities that enhance, complement, or contribute to the University's research culture, international partnerships, and knowledge exchange environment.
- Visiting researchers contribute to the University by bringing new perspectives, strengthening our global research networks, supporting knowledge exchange, and enhancing the research environment for staff and doctoral researchers. Hosting visitors also provides opportunities for collaboration, mutual learning, and reputational benefits for the University of Westminster.
- The University must ensure that engagement with external individuals is conducted in a safe, transparent, and appropriately regulated manner and is consistent with its wider research and knowledge exchange policies. Therefore, this policy provides clarity on scope, expectations, governance, and institutional responsibilities associated with hosting visiting researchers. It outlines the categories of visitors, core requirements for academic sponsorship, and the conditions under which access to university facilities, systems, and resources may be granted.
- This policy only applies to visiting researchers at all levels and provides an overarching framework underpinning the University's approach to hosting visiting researchers. For

further details, please refer to the supporting procedures, annexes, and checklists, which provide operational guidance on approvals, right-to-work requirements, induction, and local administrative processes.

- The University recognises that visiting research collaborations may take place through in-person, hybrid, or fully virtual arrangements. This includes collaborations conducted through virtual meetings, webinars, online workshops, shared digital research environments, and other forms of electronic collaboration. Such arrangements remain subject to appropriate academic oversight and institutional procedures proportionate to the nature and level of engagement.
- The objective of this policy is to ensure that:
 - a. Visiting research activities aligns with the University's values, strategies, and statutory obligations.
 - b. Appropriate governance, oversight, and risk management are in place when granting access to people, systems, spaces, and research environments.
 - c. Hosting arrangements are consistent, equitable, and transparent across Schools and Research Communities.
 - d. The benefits of welcoming visitors to the University, visiting researchers, and external partners are maximised.

4. DEFINITIONS AND SCOPE OF THE POLICY

- The hosting of Visiting Researchers contributes to the enhancement of the University's research culture, international collaboration, and knowledge exchange environment. All Visiting Researchers must demonstrate a clear academic or research-related purpose and be formally linked to a named academic host, research centre, or research group.
- This policy applies to all Schools and relevant professional service teams involved in supporting, approving, or administering visiting researcher arrangements. The University, through the appropriate approving authorities (including Heads of School/Colleges, the Head of Graduate School, or their nominated representatives), reserves the right to reject any application where it does not meet institutional requirements, strategic priorities, or compliance obligations.

- This policy governs all visiting research activities undertaken on university premises or conducted under the University's auspices, whether in the UK or overseas. Visiting research activity may be undertaken physically on university premises, remotely through virtual engagement, or through hybrid arrangements combining in-person and online participation. The same principles of academic sponsorship, governance, compliance, and professional conduct apply irrespective of the mode of engagement, although operational requirements may differ depending on the nature of the arrangement. For the purposes of this policy, the University recognises three overarching categories of Visiting Researchers. Appointments under this policy are intended to:

- Category 1: Visiting Academic Staff and Researchers

Academic colleagues and researchers at all career stages employed by external institutions who visit the University to undertake collaborative research activities. These visitors frequently come from outside the UK, including non-EU countries, and typically stay for short periods (e.g., two to three months), with the possibility of a longer visit dependent on visa permission.

- Category 2: Visiting Professional Researchers

Professionals who are not employed by an academic institution but engage in research activities in collaboration with University of Westminster colleagues. For individuals visiting from outside the United Kingdom, the duration of their stay is subject to the requirements set by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI).

- Category 3: Visiting Research Students

- a) Students enrolled on a doctoral or equivalent research qualification at their home institution visiting the University of Westminster to undertake a formal, supervised period of study. This includes those participating in doctoral collaborative partnerships, typically staying between six months and one year, often supported by sponsorship from their home institution or government. Unlike Category 1 visitors, these individuals are fee-paying students formally enrolled as Visiting Doctoral Research Students.
- b) Undergraduate students, Masters students, and other students from external institutions participating in structured research collaborations, placements, internships, research projects, or short-term research exchanges with the University of Westminster. These arrangements may include participation in laboratory, fieldwork, creative, or collaborative research activities under the oversight of an academic host or research group.

- This policy does not apply to:

- i. Individuals directly employed by the University of Westminster including Postdoctoral Research Fellows, Postdoctoral Research Associates, contract researchers, and other employees engaged through standard University recruitment and employment processes.
- ii. Individuals awarded honorary titles (e.g., Visiting Professor, Emeritus roles).

This policy should be read in conjunction with the University's broader frameworks on research governance, ethics, immigration compliance, health and safety, equality, diversity and inclusion, and information governance.

5. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The effective implementation of this policy requires clearly defined roles and responsibilities across academic, professional services, and institutional functions. All parties involved in visiting researcher arrangements are expected to act in accordance with the principles set out in this policy and ensure compliance with relevant University regulations.

Visiting Researchers, Academics, Scholars and Students are responsible for:

- Conducting their research and related activities in accordance with the University's policies on [research governance](#), [code of research good practice](#), [ethics and integrity](#), [intellectual property](#) and all other relevant policies and procedures.
- Complying with all applicable University regulations, including those relating to health and safety, information security, data protection, equality, diversity and inclusion, and dignity at work.
- Ensuring that appropriate approvals (e.g. ethical approval, regulatory permissions) are obtained prior to commencing any research activity where required.
- Adhering to the terms and conditions of their visit, including the agreed duration, scope of activity, and access to university facilities and systems; access to university systems, facilities, desk space, and buildings may only be granted for a fixed, time-limited period. All access will cease at the end of the agreed period.
- Maintaining appropriate standards of professional conduct and behaviour while representing the University.
- Acknowledging the University of Westminster affiliation in publications and outputs arising from the visit, where appropriate.

- Declaring any relevant conflicts of interest, external affiliations, or funding sources that may have a bearing on their activities. High-risk proposals may be declined, escalated, or subject to additional controls, including assessments under the UK Foreign Influence Registration Scheme (FIRS).
- Complying with immigration requirements, including maintaining valid permission to undertake their activities in the UK.

Academic Hosts hold primary responsibility for the academic oversight of Visiting Researchers Academics, Scholars and Students and are responsible for:

- Ensuring that the proposed visit has a clear academic or research-related purpose and aligns with School, College, and institutional priorities.
- Sponsoring and supporting the application for visiting status, including confirming the academic rationale and expected outcomes of the visit.
- Ensuring that appropriate approvals are obtained in line with university processes prior to the commencement of the visit.
- Providing appropriate academic oversight and guidance throughout the duration of the visit.
- Facilitating the integration of Visiting Researchers into the relevant research environment, including access to appropriate research communities and activities.
- Ensuring that Visiting Researchers are aware of, and comply with, relevant University policies and requirements;
- Notifying the relevant School or professional service teams of any changes to the visitor's status, scope of activity, or duration of stay.

The Heads of College or their nominated representatives are responsible for:

- Approving visiting researcher applications at School level, ensuring alignment with strategic priorities and resource capacity.
- Ensuring that appropriate academic sponsorship and oversight arrangements are in place.
- Considering and approving any associated resource implications, including space, facilities, and administrative support.

- Ensuring that risks associated with hosting the visitors are identified and appropriately managed.
- Approving any fee waivers or financial arrangements in accordance with university policy.

The Head of Graduate School, or their nominee, is responsible for:

- Overseeing the approval of Visiting Research Students, ensuring compliance with academic and regulatory requirements.
- Ensuring that appropriate supervision, enrolment, and fee arrangements are in place.
- Confirming that visiting research student arrangements align with university regulations governing doctoral education.

The Research and Knowledge Exchange Office are responsible for:

- Providing institutional oversight of this policy and ensuring its consistent application across the University.
- Developing and maintaining associated procedures, guidance, and supporting documentation.
- Advising Schools and professional service teams on research governance, compliance, and risk management considerations.
- Monitoring institutional compliance with relevant regulatory and governance requirements related to visiting researchers.
- Supporting the review and continuous improvement of visiting research arrangements.
- Maintaining a central record/database of Visitors at all levels to support oversight, reporting, and compliance requirements.

Relevant professional service teams (including, but not limited to, HR, Finance, Information Systems and Services, and Compliance teams) are responsible for:

- Supporting the implementation of this policy within their respective areas of responsibility.
- Ensuring that access to systems, facilities, and services is granted in accordance with approved arrangements and institutional policies.
- Ensuring compliance with immigration, right-to-work/right-to-study, and related regulatory requirements.

- Supporting financial, contractual, and administrative processes associated with visiting researcher arrangements.
- Contributing to the identification and management of risks associated with visiting activity.

6. FEES AND FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

- A proportionate assessment should be undertaken to determine the anticipated benefits of hosting a visitor alongside the costs and resource implications for the University, including whether any charges should be applied.
- The University may levy charges to cover the costs associated with hosting Visiting Researchers or Visiting Research Students. Any decision to waive fees must be approved by the Head of Graduate School, Head of School, or their nominated representative (e.g., School Research and Knowledge Exchange Lead or School Doctoral Researcher Coordinator). No visitor may be hosted or invited without prior approval.
- Visitors are responsible for their own accommodation and living costs unless an approved funding arrangement exists. Any financial support must be processed through the standard University system.

7. VISA REQUIREMENTS

- Immigration, visa, and right-to-work/right-to-study requirements apply where Visiting Researchers undertake activities physically within the United Kingdom. The University must verify and retain appropriate documentation in accordance with UK Visas & Immigration (UKVI) obligations where applicable.
- For fully virtual visiting arrangements undertaken outside the UK, immigration requirements will not normally apply; however, such arrangements must still comply with relevant University procedures, governance requirements, information security obligations, and applicable international regulations.

8. PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT AND BREACH OF POLICY

- Visiting Researchers are expected to uphold the highest standards of professional conduct and comply with all relevant University policies and regulations.
- Any alleged misconduct will be addressed in accordance with the [University's established procedures relating to research integrity, disciplinary matters, and professional conduct](#). This may include investigation by the appropriate authority within the University.

- The University reserves the right to suspend or terminate a Visiting Researcher's appointment where there is evidence of misconduct, breach of policy, or non-compliance with legal or regulatory requirements. Access to University systems, facilities, and resources may be withdrawn with immediate effect where necessary.

9. EXTENSION OF APPOINTMENT

- Requests to extend a Visiting Researcher's appointment must be submitted in advance of the agreed end date and will be subject to the same level of scrutiny and approval as the initial application.
- Extensions must be supported by the academic host and approved by the relevant authority (e.g. Head of School, Head of Graduate School, or nominee), taking into account the continued academic value of the visit, resource implications, and compliance requirements, including immigration permissions where applicable.
- Any extension will be granted for a defined period, and access to university systems and facilities will be updated accordingly.

10. CONTACT

For inquiries about the policy please contact Research-knowledge-exchange-office@westminster.ac.uk