

PhD Project Placements for Tier 4 Students

Draft IGS Proposal for Strategy Committee: 22 June 2016

Requirements the placement must meet in order to comply with UKVI and IGS rules:

Integral: The placement must be integral to the student's PhD; i.e. the research that the student will do during the placement must form an integral part of the student's PhD thesis.

Assessed: The placement must also be assessed. This requirement is usually met by the student being asked about the placement during his or her viva. If this is not included in the viva, the placement must be assessed in another way.

Length: The placement must not be longer than 50% of the degree programme.

Does not delay PhD completion: The student and the supervisor must agree that the student will be able to complete their PhD before the Maximum End Date, despite taking the required number of months out for the placement. They will be required to submit a document to IGS explaining exactly how the placement project, as agreed with the industrial partner, is genuinely an integral part of the student's PhD plan, rather than a diversion which could impact on the student's completion date (see Step 2 below).

Payment: The placement may be either paid or unpaid.

Stipend:

- If the placement is paid, and the student normally receives a monthly stipend, the stipend payments will be suspended during the Leave of Absence.
- If the placement is unpaid, and the student normally receives a monthly stipend, the stipend payments will continue during the Leave of Absence.

Mode: The project placement may be either part-time or full-time. If it is part-time, the student must continue working on other aspects of his or her PhD when not working directly on the project placement, for all normal working hours during the Leave of Absence.

Procedure for arranging PhD project placements for Tier 4 students:

If the placement meets the above requirements, the student and supervisor must follow the procedure outlined below, in order to obtain approval for the student to undertake the placement. This procedure will ensure that the School and the University continue to fulfil their Tier 4 monitoring and sponsorship obligations.

1. The student should first obtain an informal, written placement offer from the host company. The company may make the offer conditional on IGS granting the student a Leave of Absence, and on the University's Immigration Compliance team filing a report with UKVI about the student's placement and temporary change in location.
2. The supervisor must request a Leave of Absence for the student, by filling out the supervisor section of the Leave of Absence Request form, and sending it to IGS at: igs@inf.ed.ac.uk

The Leave of Absence Request form can be downloaded from:

<http://web.inf.ed.ac.uk/infweb/student-services/igs/mscr/programme-changes/leave-of-absence>

In addition, the supervisor and the student must draw up the following two documents, which the supervisor should email to IGS with the Leave of Absence Request form:

- **Document 1:** A detailed explanation of how the placement project (as agreed with the industrial partner) is genuinely an integral part of the student's PhD plan, rather than a diversion which could impact on the student's completion date. This document must also explain how the placement will be assessed. For example, if the research that the student will do during the placement will form an integral part of the student's PhD thesis, and if this research will be

assessed during the student's viva, or as part of the marking process for the PhD thesis, this should be explained.

- **Document 2:** An outline of the arrangements for continued supervision while the student is away. In order for the School to continue fulfilling its sponsorship duties, the student and supervisor must schedule and stick to a series of 'engagement points', to ensure that the student is still engaging with studies, and is still based in the pre-agreed location. These engagement points may be Skype meetings, emails or phone calls, which must occur at the agreed times. It is recommended that these engagement points occur once per week while the student is away; once per month is the minimum acceptable frequency. If, while away, the student cannot attend one or more of the six compulsory attendance monitoring contact points with Student Administration, these must be replaced by an engagement point with the supervisor. The engagement points must be recorded using the 'Engagement' tab in the student's EUCLID record. Please see the following web page for more details:
<http://web.inf.ed.ac.uk/infweb/admin/policies/tier-4-policy/pgr-students>

3. If IGS agrees that the placement will form an assessed and integral part of the student's research, it may approve the Leave of Absence. The Leave of Absence must be formally approved by the Deputy Head of Graduate School (DHoGS) before the student leaves Edinburgh.

If IGS approves the Leave of Absence, the Leave of Absence will be recorded on the student's EUCLID record.

Note: *The essential thing here is that Immigration Compliance (Kate Monroe, Kate.Monroe@ed.ac.uk) must find out about the Leave of Absence through the student's EUCLID record. The record could be updated directly by IGS, or IGS could tell Student Records (part of Student Administration) and ask them to update the student's EUCLID record. IGS to decide which option would be best. But in order to comply with UKVI rules, Immigration Compliance must find out about the LoA through the student's EUCLID record, regardless of the length of the LoA.*

4. The University's Immigration Compliance team (part of Student Administration) will use this information on EUCLID to file a report about the placement and the student's location change with UKVI. This report will be added to the student's CAS, and will also be visible on the student's EUCLID record in the 'Immigration Overview' section.

Note: *According to Immigration Compliance, we do not need explicit approval from IC regarding the student's placement proposal, nor do we need to wait for UKVI to accept the IC report placed on the student's CAS. I originally suggested this procedure, but IC indicated it was not required.*

5. IGS will also write a letter for the student to give to the host company, stating that IGS approves the placement, and that a report has been filed with UKVI, allowing the student to undertake it.

6. If the company requires further information before making the student a firm offer, IGS and the supervisor should liaise about this.

7. There must be a formal agreement outlining the terms of the placement. This must include:

- project title, start date and delivery deadline
- location
- details of the engagement points agreed between the student and the supervisor.

The agreement must also state:

- that the company will inform the School if the student fails to attend his or her placement, or if he or she drops out before the agreed end date;
- that the student must inform the supervisor if he or she will travel to another city while away on a Leave of Absence;
- how the placement will be assessed, and why it is integral to the student's PhD.

Supervisors can contact the School of Informatics' Business Development Executives for further advice about the formal agreement for the placement.

Placements outside the UK:

If a Tier 4 student wants to undertake a project placement outside of the UK, the above procedure still applies, but the student may also have to obtain a visa in order to enter the relevant country. Please contact the International Student Advisory Service for advice:

visahelp@ed.ac.uk

0131 651 3185

RCUK Rules for EPSRC-funded Students:

If the placement is unpaid, then the student's stipend does not need to be suspended.

If the placement is paid, then the stipend must be suspended for the duration of the placement.

If an EPSRC-funded student takes a Leave of Absence in order to do a paid placement, their expected submission date and funding end date (=studentship end date) in Je-S **do not** need to be amended, as their Prescribed End Date and Maximum End Date will not be postponed.

Note: *This has been confirmed by an EPSRC Portfolio Manager.*

PhD Project Placements for Non-Tier 4 Students

The procedure for non-Tier 4 students is similar to that for Tier 4 students, with the exception that they must take an **Interruption of Studies**. This extends their Maximum End Date and Prescribed End Date by the duration of the placement.

There is also a requirement for formal approval of the placement by IGS in the case of non-Tier 4 students.

Note: *failure to record placements as interruptions will typically make it more difficult for the student to complete their PhD on time. Interruptions cannot be enacted retrospectively, and an extension of studies when non-interrupted students “run out of time” will not be granted if the reason is that the student took an unrecorded placement for which an interruption was not sought by the supervisor.*

A diagram illustrating the main differences between Tier 4 and non-Tier 4 students' PhD placements, in terms of their end dates and handling of stipends is shown below.

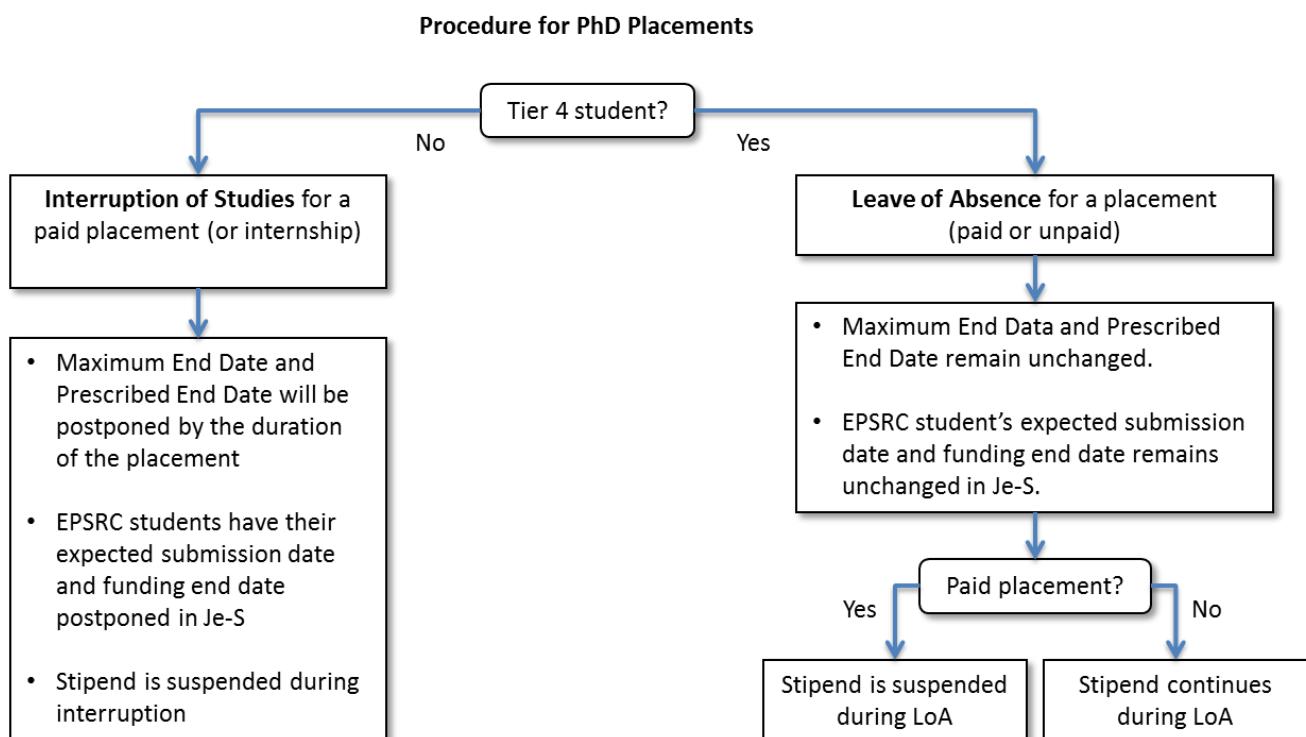


Figure 1: Summary of impact on end dates and stipends, for all PhD Placements