



Postgraduate Student Handbook
Department of Earth Sciences
2025 – 2026

If this document is not in a format accessible to you, contact the Postgraduate Administrator and we will provide the information in a more suitable format. Please email pgadmin@esc.cam.ac.uk

If you have any comments on this publication or suggestions for topics for inclusion in future editions, please email pgadmin@esc.cam.ac.uk

Contents

Welcome from the Postgraduate Director	5
Contact information.....	6
1. Introduction to the PhD	7
1.1. Office / desk space	7
1.2. Holiday entitlement.....	7
1.3. Funding	8
2. Supervision	8
3. Structure.....	9
3.1. First year (probationary year)	9
3.1.1. Skills training	10
3.1.2. Personal webpage.....	10
3.1.3. The First Year Assessment	10
3.1.4. First year report guidelines.....	11
3.2. Second year	12
3.2.1. The 2nd year report	12
3.2.2. Seminar/talk presentation.....	12
3.2.3. WEBPAGE PROFILE.....	12
3.3. Research training.....	12
3.3.1. Transferable Skills Training	12
3.3.2. Research training and personal skills development	13
3.3.3. External training courses	13
3.3.4. Teaching opportunities for PhD students.....	13
3.4. Final year	13
4. Support costs for research	14
4.1. Department's travel allocation	14
4.2. University fieldwork fund.....	14
4.3. Other possible support from the Department.....	14
4.4. Cambridge University Funds:	14
4.5. The Cambridge Philosophical Society Travel Grant	14
4.6. NERC and EPSRC FUNDED STUDENTS ONLY	15
5. Fieldwork, lab work, risk assessment and insurance	15
Working Away from Cambridge.....	15
Fieldwork.....	15
5.1. Department Safety Procedures	16

5.2.	Laboratory and Experimental Work	16
5.3.	Leave to Work Away	16
5.4.	Insurance	16
5.5.	Field and laboratory equipment	16
6.	Submitting your thesis	16
6.1.	The oral examination (viva)	17
7.	Code of practice	17
8.	Student support and course evaluation.....	18
8.1.	Individual support.....	18
8.2.	Course Representatives on the Postgraduate Affairs Committee (PAC)	18
9.	PhD standard timeline.....	18
	PhD Timeline October 2024	18
10.	Department information	21
10.1.	Library	21
10.2.	Student wellbeing	21
10.3.	Disability support.....	21
10.4.	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	21
11.	University processes and information	21
11.1.	Degree Committee	21
11.2.	Change of student status.....	22
11.3.	Plagiarism	22
11.4.	Complaints.....	22
11.5.	Additional University training and development courses.....	22
11.6.	Directory and Maps of Cambridge	22
12.	Working while doing your PhD	22

Welcome from the Postgraduate Director

Welcome to the University of Cambridge and the Department of Earth Sciences. We are looking forward to getting to know you and supporting your learning and research as you complete your postgraduate degree. As a department, we are privileged that you have chosen to contribute to our growing and ambitious postgraduate community. We hope that you have a highly successful and enjoyable time here.

This course guide and handbook introduce arrangements for PhD students in the Department and outlines key issues and procedures. It refers to, and should be read alongside, the webpages at <https://www.esc.cam.ac.uk/current-graduate-students/postgraduate-resources>. It will help if you familiarise yourself with the general guidance to PhD students across the University available at the [University Student Registry website](#). Likewise, the Departmental [Code of Practice](#) for postgraduate research students is a handy outline of the expectations of PhD students and their supervisors.

Cambridge can be a confusing place; you will have many demands on your time, and it will take you a while to establish your working routine. There are many people here to support you in your studies, including departmental staff, your college tutor, and of course your supervisor(s). The roles and areas of expertise of each of these people are explained in this handbook, but I would encourage you to reach out to them if you need their assistance - they are all here to help! All postgraduate matters for PhD students in the Department of Earth Sciences and British Antarctic Survey (BAS) are coordinated by the Postgraduate Administrator, who can be contacted via email at pgadmin@esc.cam.ac.uk

The Degree Committee website has a wealth of important information relating to procedure and requirements, and will remain up to date as processes change throughout your 3-4 years here - <https://www.dcesg.physsci.cam.ac.uk/>

You will be linked to (at least) one of the Department's five [thematic research groups](#); take a look at the current people working in these dynamic teams to get a feel for the activity taking place here. The Department is large and vibrant, so while the [main seminar series](#) draws in some brilliant speakers, it is also worth attending events organised by the smaller thematic groups. It is also worth keeping an eye on seminars, workshops, and symposia in other parts of the university, such as those of the Cambridge Philosophical Society or within individual colleges. You are recommended to sign up for e-mail alerts to relevant seminar series. You can also register your research interests to receive alerts from talks@cam.

Above all, enjoy the process of starting out on this exciting intellectual voyage. We are keen to help in whatever way we can, and our doors are always open.

Professor Ian Farnan

Earth Sciences Postgraduate Director 2025-26

Contact information

Head of Department

Professor Marie Edmonds
hod@esc.cam.ac.uk

Deputy Head of Department

Professor Jerome Neufeld
jn271@cam.ac.uk

Director of Postgraduate Studies

Professor Ian Farnan
if203@cam.ac.uk

General teaching enquiries

teaching@esc.cam.ac.uk

Health and Safety

Downing Site

Maryline Vautravers mv217@cam.ac.uk
Michelle Austin mea42@cam.ac.uk

Bullard Labs

Mandy Cockrill ac981@cam.ac.uk

Reception

Sylvia Wright
reception@esc.cam.ac.uk

Accounts Team

payables@esc.cam.ac.uk

Business and Operations Manager

Carol Hickman
EarthSciencesBOM@esc.cam.ac.uk

Postgraduate Administrator

Mrs Emma Chapman
pgadmin@esc.cam.ac.uk

Disability Liaison Officer

Maryline Vautravers mv217@cam.ac.uk

Buildings and Premises

Chris Parish (Downing Site) Crp20@cam.ac.uk
Mandy Cockrill (Bullard Labs)
ac981@cam.ac.uk

News & Media

Dr Erin Martin-Jones
comms@esc.cam.ac.uk

IT support

Downing Site and Bullard Labs
itsupport@esc.cam.ac.uk
IEEF
itsupport@ieef.cam.ac.uk

Please read the whole of this handbook and retain it for future reference

We generally communicate with everyone via e-mail, and you will be receiving a series of announcements this way. You have a pigeonhole in the Department which will be used for physical post addressed to you.

1. Introduction to the PhD

A PhD in the Department of Earth Sciences is usually completed in 3 to 3.5 years, and as such the PhD programme is designed to help support students through their studies in this time frame.

There is an expectation that PhD students will actively contribute to the research environment both in the Department and externally.

PhD students will primarily be advised in their studies by an agreed supervisor, with additional support and guidance provided by the Department of Earth Sciences Postgraduate Office and the Degree Committee.

1.1. Office / desk space

Your desk allocation is by research group where possible and is agreed by your supervisor with the Departmental Administrator before your arrival. Unless a PC is requested, your office will offer an empty desk space where you will need to bring your own laptop.

All postgraduate students are welcome to use the Common Rooms on the ground floor in the Earth Sciences building on Downing Site, and in Madingley Rise House, with coffee/tea making facilities. There is also a small kitchen for making tea/coffee on the top floor of the Austin Building. These common rooms are shared with all staff in the department. Please remember to leave all rooms tidy and clear of personal items. Mugs, plates and cutlery that have been used should be washed up and put away, and the area should be left tidy for other members of the Department to use. Unless otherwise indicated, please note that any food items (other than milk) left in the fridge are not for communal use.

Whilst in the Department you will be asked to abide by all local guidance regarding the use of the building and facilities. Please familiarise yourself with the current safety advice, as well as updates here:

<https://www.esc.cam.ac.uk/resources/health-and-safety>

All areas vary in the degree of security offered and you are advised that it is unwise to leave valuable or confidential material in offices. The Department can take no responsibility for any losses that arise.

1.2. Holiday entitlement

Research students are entitled to take up to 8 weeks of holiday each year and are normally expected to arrange their holiday so that they still keep term. Whilst the University does not officially set rules on the hours of attendance, it does recommend that full-time students work for 40 hours per week and part-time students 20 hours per week. Any PhD students wishing to take holiday should gain approval from their supervisor.

There is information about [holiday entitlement](#) on the Degree Committee for Earth Sciences and Geography website.

Reporting rules for student leave

Please refer to your funders handbook for information on other student leave

[New UKRI Terms and Conditions](#)

1.3. Funding

You will often find it necessary to search for financial resources to underpin your research, especially your fieldwork. Your main funding body should be your first port of call. Your College may also have funds to which you can apply, and the [University has a number of funds](#).

Applicants for any funds should consult their supervisor before making an application as the supervisor will usually have to write a supporting statement, and needs to be given time to do so. Students should take care to complete the form in detail so that the Fund Managers can judge the level of funding required, and can see both the quality of planning and the importance for research of the proposed expenditure.

The [University Funding Search](#) also has information on available funds.

Many funding sources are advertised in the University official newsletter known as the [Reporter](#) in a Special Issue early in November each year.

UK Research Council funded students are advised to contact their Doctoral Training Centre (DTC) or Programme (DTP) at the University of Cambridge for up-to-date information about Research Training Support Grants and other funds they may be eligible to apply for through their DTC or DTP.

2. Supervision

All students are allocated a **supervisor** who has the primary responsibility for overseeing satisfactory progress of their work and who must be a well-established researcher in the student's field. Sometimes there may be a second supervisor, either within the Department, from another department, or an affiliated research institute, for example BAS.

PhD supervisors will advise you in your studies, not direct you. Students must accept responsibility for their own research activity and candidacy for a degree.

Postgraduate work demands a high degree of self-discipline and organisation. Students are expected to take full responsibility for producing the required course work to the deadlines specified under the timetable for submission. An important function of research is to train and assess how well students cope with working both as an independent scholar, and as part of a team with other students during assignments or with academic staff within research groups. It is therefore essential for students to establish a working routine and timetable. Through your supervisor, and discussion with peers and other academic staff, you will be included in one of the Department's [Thematic Research Groups](#). It is important that you participate in the activities of the groups, information will be available through the website and circulated by email throughout the year.

It is important to remember that supervisors are not always available (they may be away on research fieldwork, etc.). They have other commitments, and other students, and might prefer to work towards meeting dates fixed in advance in diaries. Students must also remember in preparing their timetables that they must allow reasonable time for their supervisors to read and comment on any draft material. Timetables, therefore, need to be arranged carefully with individual supervisors, and with their other commitments, in mind. Whilst students may meet with supervisors frequently, for example in the lab or over coffee, regular formal progress meetings should be arranged.

Each student may expect to see their supervisor approximately every fortnight in the first year and then monthly thereafter. Overall, a minimum of ten hours per year of detailed contact and guidance can be expected. Supervision can sometimes increase during the writing up period.

When a supervisor is on sabbatical leave, it is common practice for them to continue to supervise postgraduate students, even when the leave is taken outside Cambridge, but it might also be appropriate for a second supervisor to be assigned, or for a previously assigned supervisor to take a larger role.

Arrangements will have to be made if a supervisor is going to be on leave for parental/care/health reasons. Students and supervisors must discuss this well before the leave commences and provide a communication to the Postgraduate Office on how it is proposed to maintain contact and, as appropriate, who the mentor supervisor will be and what their precise role will be. These communications will be reviewed by the Postgraduate Director and clarified if necessary, so that a satisfactory arrangement for the student, supervisor and Postgraduate Office is achieved. If supervisor arrangements are not in place or are not working, the student is encouraged to reach out to their Academic Adviser.

All PhD supervisors complete a report on each student's progress at the end of each term on CamSIS/PFRS. These reports are reviewed by the Postgraduate Office, Degree Committee and College, and are available to be reviewed by the student. These reports form part of your student record and are intended as frank assessments of progress to date. In the event of concerns about the report by the student, these should be raised in the first instance with the supervisor, and/or discussed with your Academic Advisor (see below) and/or the Postgraduate Director. The system also allows for student self-evaluation in Michaelmas Term. Further information on Postgraduate Feedback and Reporting can be found [here](#).

In addition to their main supervisor each student has a departmental **Academic Adviser**. The departmental Academic Adviser acts to provide you with advice regarding any concerns arising that may require a second opinion or that cannot be dealt with satisfactorily by the supervisor. Students experiencing difficulty in meeting with supervisors, or with concerns about funding or other Department arrangements that cannot be resolved by their supervisor, should discuss this with their Academic Advisor. Do also remember that you have a Graduate Tutor in your College, who should be your first port of call for personal and pastoral matters.

The student will also have an allocated panel of **two Assessors** who are working in related areas. One assessor may be from outside the Department. The assessors will meet the student together or in two separate meetings to discuss the First Year Report submitted by each student and will write the feedback on the report and viva. The feedback from assessors and supervisors is reviewed by the Postgraduate Affairs Committee, who then approve candidates to the Degree Committee to be registered for a PhD.

Detailed information on the responsibilities and mutual expectations of supervisors and advisors is provided in the [Code of Practice](#).

The Chair of the Postgraduate Affairs Committee (Postgraduate Director), your Academic Adviser, one of the Postgraduate Affairs Student Representatives or the Postgraduate Administrator will also be happy to advise. At a local level if any issues arise that need action, details should be passed on to the Business and Operations Manager or discussed informally by the Adviser with the supervisor. The University has a formal Student Complaints Procedure. Details can be found at: www.studentcomplaints.admin.cam.ac.uk/student-complaints.

If any postgraduate student feels that there are concerns regarding either of the Academic Adviser or Assessors assigned, they can discuss this with the Postgraduate Administrator or a different Academic Adviser, who will arrange a substitute if appropriate.

3. Structure

3.1. First year (probationary year)

Postgraduate students setting out to work for a PhD are registered for their degree at the end of their first 'probationary' year.

Probationary PhD students are not normally allowed to work away from Cambridge (e.g., to start fieldwork during their first year). It is understood that in some cases fieldwork is necessary early in the duration of a PhD. Under these circumstances, a student, with the support of their supervisor, can ask the Degree

Committee for permission to work away for a short period in their first year. A timely academic case will need to be made by the supervisor detailing why it is necessary, and confirmation that the student is on track will be required by the Postgraduate Director for approval. Please note that all requirements such as Leave to Work Away and risk assessments approval will need to be completed in advance of any fieldwork (and approval can take up to 6 weeks), so it is in your interest to apply early and make sure all the conditions are met. This is for your safety.

3.1.1. Skills training

Developing academic, professional and interpersonal skills is a key aspect of the PhD training programme. Cambridge University has developed a [Skills Portal](#) where you can find links and resources for key aspects of the university's training and support services. At the outset of your PhD, it is important to assess your current skills and skills you will need over the years of your PhD study, then plan how you will acquire the skills needed. Skills training will also be offered through the DLA, the sessions of which are generally open to all PhD students.

3.1.2. Personal webpage

All PhD students are expected to prepare a biography webpage giving an outline of their research. This should be done by following instructions [here](#). The deadline for this is the end of week 3 in term 3 (Easter Term).

3.1.3. The First Year Assessment

The First Year Assessment (FYA) for first year PhD students is seen by the Department as the most crucial step in student development. The Assessment is normally the time at which a decision must be made on whether progress is sufficiently promising that the student should be registered for a PhD Degree.

In early April you will be asked to prepare, by end of May, a short report of up to 2,500 words maximum (plus figures). The report will typically summarize the aims of your project within its wider research area, describe the context of your research project, the specific research question and your approach that would include any results so far and outline plans for the next stages of work. It should also address any resource issues required for the successful completion of the project.

Two Assessors will be appointed to meet and review your first-year report and provide feedback. At least one will be a member of the academic staff in the Department of Earth Sciences, in some cases the second Assessor may be a member of the academic staff in a different department of the University. The Assessors' feedback is an important part of the approval process for progression beyond the probationary 1st year of the PhD (i.e. leading to formal registration for the PhD degree).

Each postgraduate student should submit a copy of their first-year report to –

- their supervisor,
- each of two Assessors,
- their Academic Adviser,
- the Postgraduate Administrator via Moodle

You should then contact your Assessors and arrange a meeting to discuss the report with by the end of May, either on a one-to-one basis or together with both Assessors.

Theses dates will be adjusted for those who start in January or April (see table on the next page).

The Assessors complete a form and send it to the Postgraduate Affairs Committee (via the [Postgraduate Administrator](#)) that contains a brief summary of the viva, feedback and recommendations on the progression from NOTAF to PhD status, which is made available to the student. The Postgraduate Affairs

Committee will then formally consider feedback provided by the Assessors and the Supervisor(s) to determine if the student should be formally registered for a PhD.

Alternatively, if the project is not proceeding at the expected rate (even if through no fault of the student) or there are reservations on any of the other aspects of the project, further information may be requested up to and including the re-writing of the first-year report and a second assessment process being carried out with feedback as above. The Postgraduate Affairs Committee will assess the updated response to consider whether the scope of the project needs to be rethought and if the student should be formally registered for a PhD but carefully monitored, the probationary period should be extended with additional guidance/monitoring, or in a worst case scenario, the student could be recommended to submit work carried out so far for a MPhil or the University's Certificate of Postgraduate Study (CPGS).

3.1.4. First year report guidelines

The Postgraduate Affairs Committee is responsible for ensuring that you have made a satisfactory start to your research and that you have the chance to discuss your project with them and with your Assessors. The procedure is as follows:

- i. You will normally submit a short report (2,500 words maximum plus figures) in your first year. The report will typically summarize the aims of your project within its wider research area, describe your activities and results so far, and outline plans for the next stages of work.
- ii. You arrange a meeting with your Assessors, normally in Lent term or early summer. This is a chance to review the direction and emphasis of your project, and for you to discuss any concerns about your project or its supervision. Your assessment group needs to ensure that both you and the project have the potential to produce a successful PhD thesis. It is your responsibility to contact Assessors to schedule this meeting.
- iii. Your Assessors, together with your supervisor, are likely to recommend approval of your project at this stage, perhaps with some suggestions for its future development. In this case they will submit comments to the Postgraduate Affairs Committee, who will then recommend to Student Registry that you be registered for the PhD degree.
- iv. If it is felt that you need more time to demonstrate the viability of your research, you will be asked to submit an updated research report. Your Assessors and your Supervisor will discuss your progress with you again. If they are now reassured of your PhD potential, they will recommend that you be registered for the degree. The Postgraduate Affairs Committee may wish to keep your progress under review during the second year.
- v. If your performance and potential are found unsatisfactory for a second time, a report will be submitted to the Postgraduate Affairs Committee who will recommend that the Head of Department gives you three months' notice of termination of your PhD studentship. The Assessors may nevertheless consider that your work will be worthy of the University's Certificate of Postgraduate Study (CPGS) if you use these three months to expand your research report to between 5,000 and 10,000 words. In this case, your supervisor will guide you as to the appropriate format and content of this report.

Start Date	1 Oct	1 Jan	1 April
-------------------	--------------	--------------	----------------

Year 1 report sent to Supervisors, Assessors & Administrator for discussion	End of May	End of Aug	End of Nov
Supervisors, Assessors reports to PG Administrator	End of July	End of Oct	End of Jan
Resubmitted reports (if necessary)	End of Sept	End of Dec	End of Mar
Year 2 report/thesis plan to Supervisors & Assessors	Early May	Early Aug	Early Nov

3.2. Second year

After year 1 as a probationary research student, and following registration for a PhD, a student is expected to be more self-propelled and to have a clear idea of how their project and thesis will develop.

However, the following is expected in your second year.

3.2.1. The 2nd year report

The second year report requires you to focus on the form which the thesis will take and to reflect and record what further experimental and theoretical work needs to be carried out before writing up. The report should cover these points and include a work-plan with a timeline for completion of lab work and writing up and ideally a first draft of a thesis plan showing the chapters which will be included and comments on what work is needed for each chapter. The report should also include a plan for the curation and/or disposal of samples (field or laboratory) at the of your PhD studies, which should be developed with your supervisor and if appropriate, in collaboration with the Sedgwick Museum.

It should be submitted by early May of the second year. Copies of the report should be sent to your Assessors, and you should arrange a meeting with them to discuss it soon thereafter.

This report will normally be no more than 4 pages (with a brief summary of the thesis plan and a timeline showing the work-plan as an additional appendix). A copy of the report should also be sent to your supervisor and Postgraduate Administrator (for the Postgraduate Affairs Committee).

3.2.2. Seminar/talk presentation

By the end of the 2nd year all students should have presented a seminar/talk (for instance at the Bullard teatime talks, isotope coffee, DTP conference or similar group). You should send your Assessors, Academic Adviser (and of course your supervisor) a reminder when this is coming up.

3.2.3. WEBPAGE PROFILE

Maintain your webpage on the Department's website: it is important to keep your web page up to date. It can provide useful information for future employers and may lead to research and teaching opportunities.

To enhance your profile, you can add further details by following the instructions from the University Information Services (UIS) here: [Updating Your Profile on the Staff Directory](#).

To log in and edit your profile, open a web browser and type in <https://www.esc.cam.ac.uk/user>

3.3. Research training

3.3.1. Transferable Skills Training

[The Researcher Development Programme](#) provide many opportunities for transferrable skills training.

The [School of Physical Sciences](#) also offers a range of workshops, events and resources to support postgraduate researchers in their personal development and career management.

The STEM [Research Support Team](#), based at the Betty and Gordon Moore Library, provide research skills training, events and resources that can assist you on data management, data managements plans, open access compliance, publishing and more.

There is a searchable online [skills directory for Cambridge](#) students and research staff.

3.3.2. Research training and personal skills development

The Human Resources Division offers a [Staff Development Programme](#), particularly in teaching skills. Not all these are open to postgraduate students so do check before you book. The [Careers Service](#) also offers personal skills training courses.

3.3.3. External training courses

UK research councils (ESRC, AHRC, NERC, etc.) and VITAE provide additional training courses for their students. Students who receive funding from these sources are reminded that attendance at courses run by funding bodies are often mandatory. Please refer to information provided by your funder for further information about training courses you need to attend.

3.3.4. Teaching opportunities for PhD students

Any postgraduate student, regardless of experience or background, is encouraged to take teaching opportunities! They look great on your CV, and they help you get to know your postgraduate peers.

To ensure timely completion of your PhD, students must not undertake undergraduate supervision without their departmental supervisor's approval. It is also necessary to attend a relevant [Staff Development course](#) and the appropriate sessions run by the Department.

There are opportunities to act as **demonstrators** in practical classes of one kind or another (for example, 1A practical sessions on rock identification and thin sections).

On occasion, postgraduate students are able to **demonstrate on undergraduate field trips**. Talk to [Charlotte Kenchington](#), Teaching Support Manager, or those leading the field trip about this opportunity. It helps if you have relevant expertise or have been a demonstrator to the year group.

You may be able to give undergraduate **supervisions**, paid by Colleges. Supervisions are small-group classes involving two or three undergraduates completing work (such as numerical questions or preparing an essay) on a topic (which relate to the course for which you are supervising) which you then assess and discuss with them. You must attend the [training](#) to do so and also provide a brief report on each student supervised (uploaded to CamCORS). Supervisions are organised by Colleges, so talk to Department lecturers who are in your College if you're interested in supervising, and also to course lecturers.

To take advantage of these teaching opportunities, you should (a) talk to your supervisor; (b) look at the Course Guide and let Course Co-ordinators know that you are interested in demonstrating or supervising; (c) contact College Directors of Studies (DoS) about supervising, letting them know the fields in which you are interested in teaching; d) fill out the Teaching EOI sent by the [Teaching Office](#).

In some cases, grant awarding bodies exclude other forms of paid employment, and your visa status may also restrict the number of paid hours you can do. Please check the [work allowances](#).

There are specific training workshops on teaching and **some training is compulsory** if you wish to supervise undergraduate students.

3.4. Final year

The Degree Committee website provides guidance on the format of the thesis and summarise the process for submitting your PhD: <https://www.dcesg.physsci.cam.ac.uk/current-student/phd/phdsubmit>

4. Support costs for research

Research Council and some sponsored research studentships have around £10,000 towards research costs (RTSG) over the course of their studentship, the exact amount depends on the funding scheme/sponsor. Unfortunately, because of the different approaches taken by the various studentship sponsors, the amounts available to others may vary. The use of external facilities as well as fieldwork and travel to conferences etc. must be covered by these funds (or by applications to colleges or other sources, see below for some examples).

Expenditure is authorised by your supervisor; you should discuss with your supervisor how to balance the available funds against needs you may have over the duration of your studentship. Accounts office will keep a record of expenditure; you should be able to find out from them what may be left.

4.1. Department's travel allocation

The Department's travel allocation to all research students will be £250 per year for 2025-26. Claims, with receipts, should be made on the University [claim form](#) and sent to the Accounts Office.

Travel and other claims must be supported by receipts. Our auditors are not prepared to accept point of sale credit/debit card receipts as proof of expenditure. They also require a till receipt for point-of-sale purchases (particularly for expenses claims such as restaurants).

4.2. University fieldwork fund

You may qualify for additional support from the University Fieldwork Fund but you must apply for this when you submit an application for Leave to Work Away: <https://www.dcesg.physsci.cam.ac.uk/current-student/LWA/FieldworkFund>

4.3. Other possible support from the Department

If your estimated conference or travel costs exceed the £250 annual Department travel allowance, the University Fieldwork Fund, and any support from your sponsor, and you wish to request a grant from the Department to cover the shortfall, please follow the steps below:

1. **Consult your supervisor:** Before making a request for a grant from the Department, discuss the matter with your supervisor.
2. **Submit a written application:** Submit your application to the Head of Department well in advance of your travel. In your application, include the purpose of the conference, its significance, and the detailed cost breakdown.

Please be aware that, due to inflation in recent years, the Department's budget has not kept pace with rising costs. Consequently, we have had to closely monitor expenditures across the Department. While the Department will support necessary expenses to the extent possible, funds are limited. As a general rule, expenses incurred without prior approval will not be reimbursed.

4.4. Cambridge University Funds:

A collated source of internal funding opportunities <https://www.student-funding.cam.ac.uk/>

Also see list here: <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/so/pdfs/2024/ordinance12.pdf>

More information on the University website here: <https://www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/fees-and-funding>

4.5. The Cambridge Philosophical Society Travel Grant

- Must have been a member for at least 1 year. Consider [joining](#).
- Travel in UK & abroad to attend conferences, visit labs, conduct fieldwork, etc.
- Four deadlines per year, up to £500 available for each student in each application round

More details on their website here <https://www.cambridgephilosophicalsociety.org/>

4.6. NERC and EPSRC FUNDED STUDENTS ONLY

Conferences

NERC and EPSRC expect that within the period of the award each student should have the opportunity to attend at least one conference at which they can present findings of their research. They provide

£150pa per student towards conference attendance as part of the RTSG but that is not ring-fenced from other funds in the RTSG. Please consult your supervisor well in advance about the conferences you wish to attend. Claims, with receipts, should be made on the University [claim form](#) and sent to the Accounts Office.

NERC - Fieldwork Claims

Claims, with receipts, for fieldwork approved at the start of your studentship, should be on the University [claim form](#) and sent to the Accounts Office.

5. Fieldwork, lab work, risk assessment and insurance

Working Away from Cambridge

You must arrange insurance for all fieldwork and travel. For **activities, conferences, or meetings** held outside Cambridge, send a brief email to travel@esc.cam.ac.uk, including the host address and contact details. If the activity is considered low risk (e.g. office work, attending lectures) complete the [Low Risk Travel Assessment](#). For any UK travel that is not classified as low-risk, use the University's central notification system, [Peregrine Foresight](#), following the provided guidance.

Fieldwork

All fieldwork and overseas travel (including conferences) must be logged using the central university travel system, Peregrine Foresight, accessible here <https://www.safeguarding.admin.cam.ac.uk/peregrine-foresight>

When submitting your online travel request, please select ESC approvers rather than individual names. This ensures that your request will not go unanswered in the system if one of the approvers is unavailable, and it allows all approvers to view and process your request efficiently.

Guidance materials and videos are included via the link above for those new to the system.

Travel insurance is invalid without an approved risk assessment for fieldwork. The University's insurance covers fieldwork only once departmental approval is granted. This includes the standard precautionary requirements for both the insured (the University) and the insured person (the traveller). You must also comply with relevant local laws and safety regulations.

The Department regularly arranges fieldwork safety and first aid courses, but if your fieldwork takes you to particularly remote areas you may need to consider more advanced emergency medical training. Please discuss this with your supervisors and with Michelle Austin for further advice.

Before leaving for fieldwork, ensure the following steps are completed:

- read the Earth Sciences Safety Handbook section on fieldwork before conducting any fieldwork (Section 5.1)
- log all fieldwork and overseas travel (including conferences) on [Peregrine Foresight](#) as explained [here](#)
- obtain permission from your supervisor, College, Department, and the Degree Committee via CamSIS self-service. This must be done in advance, as it may take up to 6 weeks for approval. For your safety you must give specific departure and return to Cambridge dates and dates of all transfers between locations. This is of particular importance for overseas postgraduate students, and

anyone who is travelling in higher risk areas. As part of the Home Office's Points Based System for Immigration procedures the University has to inform the Home Office when overseas students are away, and any un-authorized absences may affect your visa. It is imperative that the information about your work away is fully logged and recorded. This means letting your supervisor and the Postgraduate Office know when you leave and when you return from working away, as well as being in touch regularly with your supervisor. **See Section 5.3 for more details on the formal Leave to Work Away procedure.**

- make sure you are insured appropriately (see Section 5.4)
- ensure that any equipment you have borrowed from the Department is insured (see Section 5.4)
- read the [Earth Sciences Fieldwork Code of Conduct](#)

5.1. Department Safety Procedures

Students must read the Department's Safety Handbook available here <https://www.esc.cam.ac.uk/resources/health-and-safety>

Fieldwork risks should be discussed with your supervisor when planning field investigation as part of your research for fieldwork or laboratory work. Any fieldwork and laboratory work must be agreed in advance with your supervisor and risk assessment forms completed and approved by the Department's Safety Officer.

5.2. Laboratory and Experimental Work

Follow the proper procedures when starting lab work or setting up experiments. Ensure all necessary safety protocols are in place. Please find laboratory process [here](#).

5.3. Leave to Work Away

If you plan to work or study away from Cambridge for more than 2 weeks, you must obtain formal approval through the "Leave to Work Away" process. For more details, visit the [Degree Committee for Earth Sciences and Geography](#) website. This approval is required for all work-related travel away from Cambridge, and the application can take up to 6 weeks to process.

For further information please see the [relevant University webpages](#).

5.4. Insurance

You are responsible for obtaining appropriate insurance before traveling for fieldwork or study abroad. The University provides [travel insurance](#), but it is only valid with an approved Leave to Work Away and Risk Assessment. The University's insurance is very good and free to apply for but may have exclusions. It's advisable to consider additional personal insurance if necessary.

5.5. Field and laboratory equipment

After reading your risk assessment, the Departmental Safety Officer may suggest that you borrow health and safety equipment (e.g. first aid kits or throw lines) to mitigate your risks while away. These are Departmental property and must be returned to the DSO when you return to Cambridge.

6. Submitting your thesis

The most detailed and up-to-date guide for submitting your PhD is provided by [the Degree Committee of the Faculty of Earth Science and Geography](#).

The majority of PhD students at Earth Sciences/BAS are expected to submit their PhD at the end of their third year. The fourth year is normally for examining purposes only, since most funding will end at the end of their third year, and it can be difficult to finish writing up whilst also undertaking full-time employment or self-

funding. Students who need to submit in their fourth year will be asked to send to the Postgraduate Administrator in their ninth term a detailed case and plan for writing up, which has their supervisor's support. It is advisable that students in their fourth year who have not yet submitted their thesis do not commit to undergraduate supervisions, other writing, or attend conferences.

All students will have a future submission date (end of registration date) recorded on their record, which they can see on their self-service page in [CamSIS](#). A PhD thesis can be submitted up to the end of the fourth year or twelfth term. There is no grace period for submission. For example, if a student has a submission date of 30 September and submits on 1st October, they are recorded as a late submission. The day the thesis is handed in is recorded as the submission date. The only exception is if the date falls on a public holiday or weekend when the Student Registry is closed. Further information can be found at <https://www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/your-course/examinations/graduate-exam-information/submitting-and-examination/phd-msc-mlitt/submit>.

This information is important as submission data determines the availability of scholarship funding for future students. Full time students can submit from the first day of their ninth term to the last day of their twelfth term. The Student Registry prepares submission rate statistics giving information on which full time PhD students have/have not submitted within the four-year limit. Statistics include all students in a Department and are not just limited to students receiving UK Research Council Funding.

Not all students are in the same situation. Life events intervene and shape the progress of a thesis. Students and supervisors are permitted to apply to the University for intermission if circumstances require:

[Details for medical intermission](#)

[Details for non-medical intermission](#)

Alternatively, students may consider part-time research. Please see the information on the [Degree Committee for the Faculty of Earth Sciences & Geography website](#).

6.1. The oral examination (viva)

Once you have submitted your thesis, and providing your examiners have already been appointed, the Degree Committee office will dispatch the copy of your thesis to the examiners. The Internal Examiner (who is normally, but not always, a member of staff of the Department) will contact the External Examiner and the student to arrange a mutually convenient time and place for the oral exam.

Examiners are busy people, and you can normally expect the oral to take 1-3 months from submission to arrange. After your oral examination the reports are sent to your Degree Committee for consideration at their earliest meeting. The Degree Committee's decision is then sent to the Student Registry, who will email you with the decision.

Please be aware that a viva must be held by early September for a student to have a chance of attending the Graduation ceremony in October - see dates for Degree Committee meetings and graduation ceremonies in the links below. Oral exams held any later will mean that the next available graduation is in November (or students can take their degree *in absentia*).

Degree Committee (and Postgraduate Committee) meeting dates can be found [here](#).

Congregation dates can be found [here](#).

7. Code of practice

As a postgraduate student you are part of the wider university community. This means that there are rules that the whole community are expected to follow. These rules are known as the [Code of Practice](#).

At the start of your course, you will be asked to sign a document to say that you have read the Code of Practice and agree to abide by it.

8. Student support and course evaluation

8.1. Individual support

If you require help with any personal difficulties and circumstances (financial, illness, etc.), contact your College Postgraduate Tutor in the first instance.

For administrative issues connected with your PhD, please contact the Postgraduate Administrator.

To deal with any other matter relating to your PhD, please contact the Postgraduate Director. S/he will either have office hours or will be able to make an appointment.

8.2. Course Representatives on the Postgraduate Affairs Committee (PAC)

A course representative is an individual selected to represent the views and concerns of their peers at relevant departmental meetings. Both MPhil and PhD course representatives serve on the Postgraduate Affairs Committee (PAC), which meets on a termly basis to discuss matters affecting postgraduate students.

Later in the academic year, nominations for course representatives are called for. In cases where more than one nominee is put forward from a particular cohort, a secret ballot will be held, and the candidate with the highest number of votes will be appointed as the representative.

Further details regarding the election process for course representatives will be provided in the Lent term.

Additionally, a student representative is required to represent Earth Sciences at the Faculty Board committee meetings at the Physical School level, ensuring the views and interests of Earth Sciences students are adequately represented in broader faculty discussions.

9. PhD standard timeline

Please note that if you are a part-time research student or began your studies in the Lent Term, you should refer to your specific timetable.

If you take time away from your PhD, the standard timeline will be adjusted accordingly. Be sure to check your CamSIS record for a revised *Final Submission Date*.

PhD Timeline October 2025

Postgraduate students operate on the basis of the Academic Year, which extends beyond the end of the Easter Term. The Academic Year commences on 1 October and finishes on 30 September each year.

All PhDs are different, though a trait they share is the need to be completed within a defined time period (usually three years). This timeline is intended to provide a set of signposts to guide the student and supervisory team through the PhD programme at the Department of Earth Sciences and BAS. While some elements of the timeline are essential tasks towards registration on the PhD degree (such as the First Year Report) or completion of the PhD itself (such as thesis submission), others are included simply to provide potential areas of discussion between supervisors and students. If you have any questions or queries, do not hesitate to ask the Postgraduate Administrator or Director of Postgraduate Studies. Supervisors are responsible for making sure that these key stages are met.

PhD Candidate:	Supervisor(s):
----------------	----------------

Year of study	Task	Due by	Completed
First year	Safety Induction to be completed	October 2025	
	Initial meeting with the supervisor	October 2025	
	Academic Adviser allocated to the student. Student is informed by the Postgraduate Office.	October 2025	
	Student and Supervisor sign the Code of Practice and send it to the Postgraduate Administrator	1 st December 2025 (before the end of MT)	
	Two Assessors appointed by Division of Lent Term. Supervisor informs the Postgraduate Office.	12 th February 2026 (division of Lent Term)	
	Plan/outline of the First Year Report to be submitted directly to the supervisor	By 11 th May 2026	
	First Year Report: upload to Moodle for First Year Assessment.	By 25 th May 2026 at the latest	
	First Year Assessment: contact your assessors and schedule a meeting to discuss your report, either individually or with both assessors present.	By 19 th June 2026 at the latest	
	Deadline for Webpage profile update	19 th June 2026	
Second year	Second Year Report: upload to Moodle for Second Year Assessment. Arrange a meeting with the Assessors for review.	3 rd May 2027	
Third year	Thesis or updated thesis plan and annual report submitted (COPY to the Postgraduate Office) (Note: PhD submission can happen on the first day of the ninth full-time term assuming you have met the three-term residency requirement. See Degree Committee website . Students who need to submit in their fourth year MUST send a detailed case and plan for writing up in their ninth term to	From first day of ninth term (usually April in ET, unless intermissions have occurred)	

	the Postgraduate Office. This must have their supervisor's support and will be reviewed by the Postgraduate Director.		
--	---	--	--

10. Department information

This section provides essential information for students, including locations, library services, IT support, and wellbeing resources.

10.1. Library

There is a [main Library](#) in the building on Downing Site, and a second Library in the Madingley Rise House, Bullard Laboratories.

In addition to the Library in the [Madingley Rise House](#) (House: up the main stairs and turn left) and the extensive Department Library (Downing Site) you are encouraged to use the [Rayleigh Physics Library](#) (Cavendish Lab) and [Moore Library](#) at Wilberforce Road.

All new students at Cambridge are automatically registered at the [University Library](#). Your blue University card can be used to access the library and borrow books.

10.2. Student wellbeing

Studying for an MPhil or PhD can be a demanding experience, but there are many support services available to help you through challenging times. Both your College and the University offer a range of resources dedicated to student wellbeing.

You can find further information and access support via the University's [Student Support website](#).

Additionally, the Department maintains a webpage with information about the available support services for students and staff <https://www.esc.cam.ac.uk/about-us/wellbeing>

10.3. Disability support

The Department works closely with the University's Accessibility and Disability Resource Centre (ADRC) to ensure that students with disabilities receive the support they need. [Maryline Vautravers](#) is the Department's Disability Liaison Officer (DLO) for Earth Sciences and is available to assist with any specific needs or concerns.

10.4. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Department is committed to creating an environment where everyone feels valued, respected, and supported. We strive to maintain a community that embraces diversity and inclusivity, celebrating individuals from all backgrounds, identities, and experiences. Regardless of race, culture, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, or any other aspect of your identity, you are welcome here.

11. University processes and information

11.1. Degree Committee

The Degree Committees ensure that departments are performing their duties correctly. The Department of Earth Sciences is overseen by the [Degree Committee for the Faculty of Earth Sciences and Geography](#). The Degree Committee oversees admitting students, ensuring they are taught/supervised correctly, resolving any issues that arise during the course of studies, and authorising the awarding of degrees.

11.2. Change of student status

Applications for intermission (a break from study), permission to work away from Cambridge or an extension to a submission date are considered changes to student status. Students are advised to talk to their supervisor prior to applying for a change of student status. Details of [how to apply to change student status](#) can be found on the postgraduate study website.

11.3. Plagiarism

Students are advised to read [the University's plagiarism website](#) and the [definition of academic misconduct](#).

11.4. Complaints

The Department of Earth Sciences follows the University procedure regarding student complaints. In the Department, the Responsible Officer for complaints and review is the Postgraduate Director, with the Head of Department acting as deputy as the situation requires.

For detailed information on the University's complaint procedure, please refer to the [following link](#).

11.5. Additional University training and development courses

Students have access to the [Universities IT training courses](#), providing access to additional training opportunities outside of their studies. These courses are designed to enhance students' skills and support their personal and professional development.

11.6. Directory and Maps of Cambridge

University Directory: Access the [online email and telephone directory](#) for staff and student contact information.

Interactive Campus Map: Explore the [interactive map of the University of Cambridge](#) to navigate the campus and locate buildings, departments, and services.

12. Working while doing your PhD

Postgraduate research students are [advised by the University](#) to limit their work commitments to 6 – 10 hours per week in addition to their studies. Under no circumstances should students work more than 20 hours per week, as this is the maximum limit set for [student visa holders](#).

[A new payment methodology for undergraduate supervisors](#) now recognises the time spent preparing for supervisions. The total work involved in supervising an undergraduate is estimated to be more than twice the number of supervisions delivered (i.e. a one-hour supervision takes more than two hours of work).

The amount of non-contact work time will vary depending on several factors. **In order to safely ensure compliance with student visa restrictions, and to follow University guidelines, postgraduate students should not supervise more than five undergraduate sessions per week.** This assumes the student is not engaged in any other paid employment.

Visa holders are responsible for ensuring they do not breach their visa conditions.

For further guidance, please consult the [Office of Intercollegiate Services](#) or the [International Student Office](#).

END OF DOCUMENT