Absence during your studies

The University has an obligation as a Student Visa educational sponsor to monitor and keep records of attendance of all international students.

A Tier 4/Student visa is issued for the purpose of full time in person study. The University understands that there will be times when you will need to be absent either because of unforeseen circumstances (bereavement, illness) or to undertake a period of study in another part of the UK or overseas (e.g. fieldwork or to work on your thesis or dissertation).

When you need to take a short break from your studies the University may approve a period of authorised absence to a maximum period of 60 days without withdrawing its Visa sponsorship. For absences in circumstances such as the ones described above Postgraduate Researchers (see below) need to complete and submit the form for *Reporting Period of Research Away from the University*.

Where you are continuing to engage with your programme of study during the period of authorised absence, the University may approve a period of absence longer than 60 days without withdrawing its Visa sponsorship. The University is obliged to continue monitoring your academic engagement and progress with your fieldwork, thesis or dissertation. Acceptable methods of contact with the university during such a period include email and skype communications with your course tutor or supervisor.

Reporting periods of research spent away from the University
The University is required to make a Change of Circumstances report to the Home Office when a student on Tier 4 /Student Visa changes their study location for a temporary period (4 weeks or longer) which is agreed by the Supervisor/School.

The activity reporting is required because the Royal Agricultural University continues to sponsor the student's visa and as such, the University has monitoring responsibilities.

The Change of Circumstances report notifies the Home Office of the temporary change of location of the student's study programme. The report benefits the student when they leave the UK and when they attempt to re-enter and return to the University as it explains their movements to the Home Office and the UKVI.

When you plan to leave the UK for the purpose of carrying out research (including fieldwork, split programme, writing-up of thesis and corrections) please ensure you have agreed this with your Supervisor and Academic department of study.

- Complete the required form(*Reporting periods of research away from the University* – provided in the appendix of this document)
- Obtain your Supervisor/Director of Research approval and signature
- Return the form to the Visa Compliance Office or via email to visas@rau.ac.uk

Valid Reasons for authorised absence

- To travel back to your home country due to an unexpected event (bereavement, emergency etc)
- Carry out fieldwork relating to your studies
- Attend a conference
- Take a holiday(postgraduate research students only)

Holiday

- Undergraduate/Postgraduate Taught students only – You are expected to attend all timetabled events relating to your course during term-time. A holiday request cannot be considered during these times. You are allowed to travel on holiday/social occasion during the University vacation time without authorisation from RAU.
- Postgraduate Taught students(MSc only) who will be working on their dissertations/research projects over the summer period will be expected to apply for an authorised absence if they want to take holiday during this time. **Working on your dissertation is term time**.
- Postgraduate researchers- supervision is expected to be carried out throughout the academic year (incl. July-August). Postgraduate research students may take up to 6 weeks holiday in each academic year, including public holidays with the prior agreement of their Supervisor or the Director of Research. Students are expected to utilise the Christmas and Easter breaks primarily for their leave.

If you plan to be away for the purpose of holiday you will need to complete a form for Authorised Absence at least 10 working days prior to your departure date.

If you have any questions regarding the information provided in this leaflet, please contact the Visa Compliance Office at visas@rau.ac.uk