



SCCA guidance on good practice for remote studying for PGT and PGR students

This guidance is intended to help PGT and PGR students' study remotely. It is partly based on guidance produced for SCCA staff by the EDI Committee and University of Glasgow health and wellbeing guidance for working or studying remotely

<https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/anywhere/wellbeing/#guidanceforworkingorstudyingremotely>)

We consider key issues regarding mental wellbeing, the study environment, connecting with peers, use of email, and separating work and home. We also point to some online resources to help make remote study easier and highlight some of the advice and resources that are available.

Mental wellbeing

Many people have experienced worse mental health and wellbeing in recent years. The pandemic has necessitated working and studying from home, and this has carried over to more hybrid ways of working and studying in the post-pandemic years. More postgraduate students in particular are studying remotely. The experience of remote study with less face-to-face contact with supervisors, lecturers and colleagues is itself a source of strain, anxiety and loneliness for many people. Therefore, there are a few things that you can do to ensure you stay well while studying remotely.

- Connect and communicate - Stay in touch with daily catch-ups and regular chats with friends, peers and family. Tools such as Skype, WhatsApp, FaceTime, Microsoft Teams and Zoom can all be used for this.
- Get outside – Build a regular routine that includes taking time out during the day so you can get outside during daylight hours.
- Stay nourished and hydrated – Be sure to eat regular meals and stay hydrated. It can be easy to forget to drink plenty of water throughout the day.
- Take regular breaks from the screen – Have a cup of tea or coffee, listen to a podcast, read a magazine, stretch your legs or even do a few household chores.
- Exercise and keep active – Move around when you can. Although the gym may be closed, there are live online classes available via the UoG Sport App: <https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/sport/app/>
- Remember to rest – Try to ensure you take time away from your studies and that you get enough rest and sleep.
- Look after your sleep – Develop a routine around bedtime that allows you to wind down after your day, and a night-time routine and bedroom environment that promote good sleep.
- Ask for help and support – Don't hesitate to ask for help or support. Please do get in touch with your programme lead, advisor of studies or supervisor.

Study environment

Our study environment has a big effect on our physical and mental wellbeing and our ability to get things done. Lack of a dedicated workspace and equipment can be a source of stress. Here are some tips for creating a good space for studying.

- Ensure you have a dedicated space for studying. Pick a spot free from distraction and clutter. Not all of us have room to make an office, but we can all pick a spot that we feel best working from. Get comfortable and work with what you have planned for the day!
- Create a daily routine – and try to stick to it. Schedule (and take!) regular breaks - Regular breaks should be a key part of your routine as they provide an opportunity to clear your head and give your eyes a break from looking at a screen, as well as time to stay active and hydrated.
- Balance work time and processing time - Studying remotely means there are likely to be a lot more virtual teaching sessions and meetings to attend. It is important to take some time in between these to process what has been discussed and update notes and any actions you may be required to do following the meeting.
- Plan your day - Create a realistic to-do list for yourself. Writing down what you need or would like to do each day gives you a checklist of what you need to get through. You can prioritise what you need to concentrate on first and work through the list until everything is done.
- Set an end-of-day routine - Shut down, switch off and focus on your own needs.
- Changing scene - consider using the University Library as a change of working environment on occasion.
- 1-2-1s and regular meetings with supervisors/advisors/peers. These provide an excellent opportunity to check in. This is especially important for PGR students and when PGT students begin to work on their dissertation.

More information is available here in the UoG Guidance for working or studying remotely (<https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/anywhere/wellbeing/>).

Connecting with peers

One of the biggest changes of remote studying is the reduction in interpersonal contact with our immediate peers and wider networks. This can have a knock-on effect on our sense of connection and camaraderie.

- Consider catching up with peers for coffee, lunch or a quick chat via Zoom or Teams.
- The SRC has information about what's on: <https://www.glasgowunisrc.org/whatson/>

Use of email

We can all do our bit to reduce email burden by thinking before sending.

- Rather than sending several brief email queries, can these be saved for a regular check-in message, teaching sessions or posted on a Teams chat.
- Consider your tone - Avoid overuse of exclamation marks and capital letters. Capital letters can be used sparingly to emphasise a word or phrase. If they are used excessively then this is the virtual equivalent of shouting.

- Consider when and how you want to receive email notifications. If you have your University email on your personal devices, consider switching off alerts to ensure you only read your emails when you are actively working.
- Stand back - Is the email/message clear and concise? Give it a final read and avoid sending emails/messages in haste. Check it for spelling and grammar. MS Outlook and Teams have tools that will help.

Separating work and home

It may be difficult to create a separate workspace at home, but there are things you can do to help.

- Manage boundaries between work and home life – Take care not to let work and home life become integrated. For some, integrating home and work life isn't a problem, but it's important to find ways to disconnect from work and re-charge your batteries. Make time for and prioritise non-work activities that energise you, either at the start or end of your working day. Be clear about your working hours, and don't be tempted to check work emails outside of your working day.
- Try to place your study equipment away from your living space, or at least out of your line of sight when you are relaxing.
- Avoid working in your bedroom if possible, as this can create a stressful association that may affect your sleep.
- Have a clear transition period at the start and end of the working day, e.g. by going for a walk.
- If you prefer structure and routine, try to keep this going while working from home. If you haven't done so, consider setting ground rules to maintain structure and boundaries.

Broadband issues

These are some tips to help minimise your impact on network capacity.

- Whilst you are logged into the VPN using the UofG Client, avoid using the same device for other internet services, or streaming audio or video.
- If you connect via Wifi, make sure you have a good strong signal. Can you move closer to your router?
- Turn on your radio or watch broadcast TV rather than stream music or video whenever possible.
- If you have to stream video, can you reduce the download demand (reducing from 4K to HD, or from HD to SD, is about a 75% bandwidth saving each time).
- Be aware of what everyone else at home is doing on the internet and work with them to not overload things when you need to work.
- Giving your broadband router a reboot from time to time (e.g. once a week) can help prevent issues.
- Understand that domestic broadband connections are sold as a shared service and at times of peak usage you cannot always expect to get the advertised speeds.

- Ensure you are aware of your broadband contract details, any usage limits and the contact and account details for your ISP in case you need to talk to them for technical support.
- You can try to use 4G and a personal hotspot on your mobile if performance on your wired broadband is poor, but be aware of your data usage limit – it can be costly if you exceed this. Check if all data in your contract is available for use as tethering or if there is any fair use limit. Use your phone to monitor your data use, and make sure you have correctly set the day of the month when your allowances renew.

Available support

Here are some resources that may be useful:

- The UofG Counselling and Psychology Services webpages (<https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/counselling/>) provide information on how to register and arrange a consultation, as well as useful self-help information on a variety of topics. For information on other Student Services visit <https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/students/supportservices/>
- UofG subscribes to Togetherall (<https://togetherall.com/en-gb/>) a safe online space to get things off your chest, explore your feelings and learn how to improve and manage your mental health and wellbeing. It's free to use and completely anonymous. It's accessible 24/7 and provides online peer and professional support by trained counsellors. You can register through the Join Us button on the site, and then select Universities & Colleges under Organisation.

Mental health support websites

- [NHS Inform](#) - a great general site for managing stress
- [Living Well](#) - grounding exercises for managing anxiety
- [Mind](#) - a charity with lots of useful information on anxiety, depression and trauma, and also has grounding exercises
- [Brothers in Arms Scotland](#) - specifically covers issues that men may be experiencing
- [Beating the Blues](#) - provides access to self-directed cognitive behaviour therapy.

Helplines

- [Breathing Space](#) – 0800 83 85 87
- [Samaritans](#) – 116 123 (free from any phone)
- [Living Life](#) – Cognitive Behavioural Therapy - 0800 328 9655

Gender based violence support

Support for people experiencing domestic abuse is available via: <https://www.endgbv.uk/> and:

- Scottish Government website: <https://www.mygov.scot/>
- Scotland's 24-hour Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline is available on 0800 027 1234.
- Rape Crisis Scotland Helpline is available on 08088 01 03 02. Calls to this number are free. Alternatively email support@rapecrisisscotland.org.uk or text 07537 410027.

- <https://refuge.org.uk/>
- <https://safeline.org.uk/>