CODE OF PRACTICE ON RESEARCH STUDENTS

Contents

1. Introduction

This Code of Practice sets out a minimum set of requirements for all parties involved in the awarding of research degrees at the University of Reading. This Code covers all such degrees including MPhil and PhD, the research elements of Professional Doctorate programmes, relevant elements of PhD by Published Works programme, and the LLM (by thesis).

The Code is also intended to supplement the existing regulations and guidelines in the University; these include:

- Regulations governing Degrees of Masters and Doctor awarded by Thesis (formerly Ordinance V in the University *Calendar*);
- Regulations governing Degree of Professional Doctorate (formerly Ordinance LX in the University *Calendar*);
- Postgraduate Research Programmes Admissions Policy;
- *Rules for the Submission of Theses for Higher Degrees*;
- *Guide for Examiners for Higher Degrees by Thesis*;
- School Handbooks for Research Students;
- Information specific to research students available via the Graduate School website at: www.reading.ac.uk/graduateschool/currentstudents and
- the online Student Handbook (not specific to research students), available at:

www.reading.ac.uk/internal/student/OnlineStudentHandbook/std-serv-osh-index.aspx

The Code is intended to promote good practice in application, supervision, training, monitoring and examining of research students and it is hoped that it will provide the means for a harmonious working relationship between the student and their supervisory team, which is vital to the success of the student's work.

Throughout the Code, the 'School' is assumed to be the organisational unit that oversees matters relating to research students. In Schools that have distinct intra-School Departments, the word 'Department' may be substituted for the work 'School' in most instances. However, in cases where the outcome of the Confirmation of Registration process is that a student is referred to the University's *Policy on and procedures relating to PhD and MPhil student academic engagement and fitness to study* or recommended for transfer to MPhil, the Head of School has ultimate responsibility.

2.   Applications and Admissions Procedures

(a)   Candidates for admission should be given as much information as possible to enable them to make an informed decision, including, where applicable, the provision of specific information relevant for students with disabilities or other special needs. Schools should review the promotional literature available for research students (including their websites) on a regular basis, to ensure that the information contained therein is accurate and up to date. Such literature should include information on:

- admissions criteria;
- research groups within the School;
- studentships or scholarships available to research students;
- training programmes
- a link to the Graduate School webpages.

Promotional literature in leaflet or brochure form should be available to send to prospective applicants through the relevant School Office, the Graduate School and the Student Recruitment Office.

(b)   Applications should be considered carefully and as rapidly as possible. Normally, a decision on a potential international student should be made within two weeks (subject to the subsequent receipt of favourable references) and on a UK applicant within six weeks, allowing for the extra time needed to conduct an interview. Slow responses may result in an applicant accepting an offer to study elsewhere. During the period when the application is under consideration, candidates should be kept informed of its progress.

(c)   Decisions on applications should involve the judgement of the School Director of Postgraduate Research Studies, in addition to the prospective supervisor, (subject to scrutiny by the relevant member of the Admissions Office staff) as to whether a candidate is to be offered a place on a research programme or rejected. In the situation where the School Director of Postgraduate Research Studies is also the prospective supervisor, a decision on the application should also include the Head of School or another senior member of academic staff.

(d)   All offers of admission will be made in writing by the Admissions Office. Admissions Office staff will have responsibility for verifying that candidates have appropriate qualifications, an acceptable level of English language ability (see point h below), and financial backing to meet the fees and living costs of their course in full.

(e)   Applicants for entry to a research degree of the University of Reading should normally possess at least a first degree (normally of an Upper Second Class honours standard or above) or equivalent. The admission of students with lower or non-standard qualifications may be approved by the Dean of Postgraduate Research Studies.

(f)   Applicants resident in the United Kingdom should normally be asked to attend for an interview. A Good Practice guide for Schools on conducting such interviews is available on the web at:

www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/graduateschool/pgrinterviewguiderevoct18.pdf

In cases where this is not possible, the School should have in place an alternative procedure (for example a Skype or telephone interview) which allows an adequate assessment of the suitability of applicants. The School Director of Postgraduate Research Studies, an appropriate nominee and/or the prospective supervisor(s) should also contact the applicant to discuss the proposed research. Furthermore, such applicants would normally be asked to visit the School before commencing their research. In the case of applicants from overseas, whom it would not normally be feasible to interview, special care should be taken in assessing the candidate's suitability to undertake the research programme proposed in the light of study previously undertaken and qualifications obtained.

(g)   In making a decision on an applicant, Schools should consider not only the academic and research ability of the candidate, but also the feasibility of the research project proposal in terms of:

- the academic standard of the research proposed;
- the clarity of the aims and objectives;
- any equipment/special facilities that may be required, and any associated additional cost;
- the skills and experience of the proposed supervisors;
- the length of time that the research may take (in the light of the expected and maximum lengths of registration).

(h)   Offers of admission should include the following information:

- Any academic requirements for admission;
- A statement detailing English language requirements; Candidates whose first language is not English should normally be asked to provide evidence of their ability in academic English. The normal entry requirement for research degrees is a score of 7 on the IELTS (International English Language Testing System) Test or an equivalent test accepted by the University, although some Departments may accept a score of 6.5. Exceptions to such a requirement may arise where the candidate has recently studied for another degree or worked in a country where English is the native language;
- A statement of the Fees (including research expenses and supervisory visit fees) and expected living costs for the course. Details of any Studentships or Scholarships that have been awarded to the applicant should also be provided, normally in a separate award letter to the offer of admission;
- The title and a brief description of the research topic to be undertaken;
- The name(s) of the proposed supervisors;
- The date of registration and any periods of time to be spent away from Reading;
- The minimum, expected and maximum lengths of registration. The minimum, expected and maximum lengths of registration for MPhil and PhD will be as follows:

	Full-time		Part-time	
	Minimum / Expected	*Maximum*	*Minimum / Expected*	*Maximum*
Mphil	2 years	3 years	3 years	6 years

	Full-time		Part-time		
	Minimum / Expected	*Maximum*	*Minimum*	*Expected*	*Maximum*
PhD	3 years	4 years	4 years	5 years	6 years

- The URL of the University *Code of Practice on Research Students*.

The Dean of Postgraduate Research Studies may agree alterations to these periods as appropriate. The earliest that students can submit their thesis without requiring the approval of the Dean of Postgraduate Research Studies is eight weeks prior to their minimum registration date[1].

(i)   Students should be provided with the following information at registration or prior to registration:

- links to the Graduate School website;
- relevant School Handbooks for Research Students;

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[1] See table above for minimum, expected and maximum periods of registration.

- details of any training programmes to be provided.

(j)   Once an offer of admission has been made, it is good practice for Schools to maintain contact with a prospective student and provide them with any relevant information.

(k)   Candidates for 'PhD' in all Schools will be registered initially for a 'PhD (initial registration)'. During the second year of registration (or part-time equivalent), a formal assessment (known as 'confirmation of registration') of the candidate's research ability and the standard of their research will be undertaken by the School 'monitoring committee' or equivalent. This assessment will result in either confirmation of registration as a PhD candidate, an agreed plan of remedial action and the opportunity to submit a further report within an agreed timescale, recommendation for transfer of registration to MPhil, or recommendation for referral to the Head of School, who will need to consider invoking the procedures for Academic Engagement and Fitness to Study, which can lead to de-registration from PGR programmes. Further information on the 'confirmation of registration' process can be found in section 6f below and in the University's separate guidance document on monitoring and assessing the progress of PGR students (web link provided in section 6).

(l)   Applications for admission to research degrees [2] at The University of Reading will be dealt with in accordance with the University's *Equality and Diversity Policy* [3] at all times.

(m)   Applications from candidates with disabilities or other special needs should be considered on merit. It is the policy of the University not to reject a student on the grounds of physical disability, sensory impairment, specific learning difficulty or mental health problems, provided that he or she is capable of being integrated into the academic community. If an offer of admission is to be made to such a candidate, then the School should pass all available information concerning the students and their needs to the University's Disability Advisory Services. It should however be the responsibility of the candidate to declare their disability or special requirements either on the application form or in a letter to the School, so as to inform the admission decision;

(n)   Schools should consider applications for the Assessment of Prior Learning (APL) or the Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) in accordance with the University's *Policy on Assessment of Prior (Experiential) Learning (AP(E)L)*, which is available on the web at:

www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/qualitysupport/apelpolicy.pdf

In considering such applications, Schools should ensure that any previous study, work or experience is at a level appropriate to a research programme.

3.   Induction

(a)   A University-wide induction event will be held by the Graduate School near the start of each term. These events will be well publicised and Schools should ensure that they do not schedule any simultaneous events that would prevent students attending the central events. At the University-wide induction events, students will be issued with a range of information including a copy of the *Code of Practice on Research Students*. Students unable to attend these events will be advised to collect this information from the Graduate School at their earliest convenience

(b)   Schools should also organise an induction for their new students, normally at the start of the Autumn Term. Such events allow new research students to start to become familiar with the research environment in the particular School and also allow information on the following to be provided to them (much of this may also be contained within School handbooks, if applicable):

- Key staff within the School with responsibilities relating to research students
- Facilities and resources available to research students;

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[2] Available at:
www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/student_recruitment/admissions_policy_for_postgraduate_research_programmes.pdf
[3] Available at: www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/humanresources/Equal-opportunities-policy-final-July-17.pdf

- Student Welfare information, including information for students with disabilities or special needs;
- Relevant skills training programmes;
- Outline of monitoring of progress procedures;
- Opportunities to interact with other research students and staff, both within their particular School and elsewhere;
- Relevant Health and Safety and ethics information.

(c) Where Schools have a small number of research student entrants, or at the beginning of the Spring and Summer Terms when the number of entrants may be small, it may not be feasible or effective to organise a formal induction session. In such circumstances, new research students should meet with the School Director of Postgraduate Research Studies and they should be encouraged to attend the Spring or Summer Term University-wide induction run by the Graduate School, or otherwise be directed to the information issued at those events.

(d) Whilst it is accepted that it may be harder to involve part-time and PhD by Distance students in induction programmes, Schools should make every effort to ensure that such students are able to attend. Schools should arrange their inductions at a time when part-time students are able to be in Reading and as noted at 10a below, it is normal practice for PhD by Distance students to be studying in Reading for the first month their research programme.

4. Supervision arrangements

(a) Any research degree involves a partnership between the student and their supervisor(s). There are responsibilities on both sides, which all parties should respect.

The responsibilities of the supervisor(s) include:

(i) giving guidance about

- the nature of the research and the standard expected;
- regulations relating to research integrity, academic misconduct[4] and ethical standards[5];
- the planning of the research programme;
- the nature and extent of the help the student may expect in preparing a thesis in its final form for submission;
- relevant literature;
- attendance at taught classes, where appropriate;
- requisite techniques (including arranging for instruction where necessary);
- necessary safety precautions.

(ii) carrying out an analysis of training and learning needs ('Learning Needs Analysis') (see section 5c);

(iii) maintaining contact through regular supervision meetings, in accordance with University and School policy and in the light of discussion of arrangements with the student (see section 4g);

(iv) being accessible to the student at other appropriate times when advice may be needed;

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[4] Available at: www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/graduateschool/pgr_academic_misconduct_statement_aug2018.pdf
[5] Information on Research Ethics is available at: www.reading.ac.uk/internal/academic-and-governance-services/research-ethics/RECethicshomepage.aspx whereas the Code of Good Practice on Research is available at www.reading.ac.uk/imps-FOIA-pubscheme-polsandprocs.aspx

(v)   giving advice on the necessary completion dates of successive stages of the work so that the whole may be submitted within the scheduled time;

(vi)   requesting written work as appropriate, and returning such work with constructive criticism and in reasonable time;

(vii)   arranging as appropriate for the student to talk about the work to staff or graduate seminars;

(viii) reporting in writing at least annually on the student's progress to the Head of School and School Director of PGR Studies and the student (see section 6b);

(ix)   ensuring that the student is made aware of inadequacy of progress or of standards of work below that generally expected, and informing the Head of School without delay if at any stage it appears that the student is unlikely to achieve the degree for which he or she is registered;

(x)   where research student projects involve external partners, the lead supervisor should be responsible for managing expectations and directing communications between the student and the external partners, and for ensuring that all parties are aware of their own and each other's roles and responsibilities;

(xi)   when the thesis is submitted, sending a written report to the Examiners via the Doctoral Examinations Officer in the Graduate School (see section 7c);

(xii)   helping students to prepare for their viva and, where applicable, to carry out requested amendments to their thesis;

(xiii) undertaking training as appropriate, and as identified in staff development reviews and by other means, in order to allow them to undertake the role of the supervisor effectively.

The responsibilities of the student include:

(i)   adhering to the Universities regulations governing research integrity, academic misconduct[2], and ethical standards[3];

(ii)   discussing with the supervisor the type of guidance and comment which is most helpful, and agreeing a schedule of meetings (see section 4g);

(iii)   taking the initiative in raising problems or difficulties, however elementary they may seem;

(iv)   agreeing and observing any necessary safety precautions and, where required, attending the appropriate training;

(v)   participating in a Learning Needs Analysis and agreeing to, and engaging in, the recommended programme of training;

(vi)   maintaining the progress of the work in accordance with the stages agreed with the supervisor, including in particular the presentation of written materials as required in sufficient time to allow for comments and discussion before proceeding to the next stage;

(vii)   providing at least annually (as required in University regulations) a formal written report to the School, outlining progress during the preceding year, the contents of which should normally be discussed with the supervisor/s before submission (see section 6b);

(viii)   deciding when he or she wishes to submit within the prescribed period of registration, taking due account of the supervisor's opinion, and informing the Doctoral Examinations Officer within the required time period. Shortly before submission of their thesis, students should inform their supervisor(s) of any special circumstances which they believe may have adversely affected their research. They should also show their supervisor(s) the final draft of their thesis before submission.

(b)   All research students should have a supervisory team containing a main supervisor who is the clearly identified point of contact. In addition, there should also be a designated second supervisor, who may be based in an organisation external to the University; the exact nature of this role will vary according to needs. The supervisory team could also include:

- additional designated supervisors
- other members of academic or research staff
- School / Department Director of PGR Studies
- a member of the applicable monitoring team for the student
- representatives of relevant partner organisations

The supervisory team should include a member of staff who has supervised a full-time research student to successful completion of their thesis in under four years (see section 4(f) below). Moreover, at least one member of the supervisory team (normally the main supervisor) should be research active'.

(c)   Where academically appropriate, Emeritus Professors may be appointed as the supervisor of a research student. However, in such cases, a current research-active member of staff of the University must act as a co-supervisor and moreover have ultimate responsibility for ensuring adherence to the current University regulations.

(d)   Where appropriate, supervisors based in an organisation external to the University may act as a primary supervisor. In such cases, this will be subject to the approval of the Dean of Postgraduate Research Studies. A current research-active member of staff of the University must also act as co-supervisor and moreover have ultimate responsibility for ensuring adherence to all relevant University regulations.

(e)   It is important for there to be clarity, amongst all those involved, on the respective roles and responsibilities of the various supervisors. These should be agreed at the outset of the project and reviewed as the project progresses. The members of the supervisory team should agree a minimum number of meetings each year and who needs to be represented at them. Where a designated supervisor is external to the University, the relevant School or Department is responsible for ensuring that the supervisor is made aware of, and adheres to, this *Code of Practice.*

(f)   Supervisors should have relevant academic and supervisory expertise. New members of the academic staff in their first appointment must attend the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice programme organised by the Centre for Staff Training and Development, which includes training sessions on research student supervision. Where a member of staff is inexperienced in supervising research students, a more experienced co-supervisor should be appointed if practicable. Such an arrangement should not only be relevant for junior members of the academic staff but also for any member of staff who has yet to supervise a full-time research student to successful completion of their thesis in under four years.

(g)   It is the responsibility of all Supervisors to undertake appropriate training to update their skills relevant to supporting and guiding research students, such as through the support and information provided by the Graduate School.

(h)   The Head of School and the School Director of Postgraduate Research Studies should take care to ensure that any one particular supervisor is only directly involved in supervising a reasonable number of research students. It is expected that the maximum number of students for whom a member of academic staff can act as primary supervisor shall not normally exceed 6; however higher numbers can be permissible depending on a) the field of research in question and b) the range and scale of other responsibilities held by that member of staff. The supervisory workload of staff should be reviewed regularly by the Head of School and the School Director of Postgraduate Research Studies as part of the existing workload models.

(i)   If a particular supervisor is temporarily ill or absent, the School should ensure that alternative supervisory arrangements within the University are made, and that the student is aware of these. Where the main supervisor is unable to fulfil his or her supervisory responsibilities for six months or more, a decision needs to be taken as to whether that supervisor should retain the lead role. Should a particular supervisor leave the University, the School should ensure that an alternative supervisor, with appropriate academic experience, is provided. If this is not possible, the School should be responsible for identifying an external supervisor with appropriate academic experience; in such cases, a current research-active member of staff of the University must act as the primary supervisor. If it is not possible to find an appropriate external supervisor in such cases, the School should be responsible for finding an alternative institution to which the student can transfer.

(j)   The supervisor and the research student should be in regular contact and should arrange to meet frequently to discuss the student's progress. Supervisory input and contact should take place at least monthly. In terms of meetings, whilst it is accepted that the frequency may alter throughout the student's research programme (dependent on the stage they have reached), the supervisor and student should agree a minimum number of meetings each term. It is recommended that normally this minimum not be less than ten per annum and that there should be more meetings initially. Skype meetings may be substituted for face-to-face meetings for students studying at a distance. A brief note of supervisory meetings should be agreed and kept by the supervisor and the student encompassing, for example:

- the date of the meeting;
- the names of those present;
- the main points of the discussion; and
- any subsequent actions agreed.

(k)   There should be an annual evaluation by each research student of their supervisory arrangements, in parallel with the annual monitoring and review of progress. This will be carried out via a standard University form, which is available on the Graduate School website[6]. All current students will be emailed this form by the Graduate School, to which the completed forms will be submitted. In the event that a student makes a complaint about their arrangements, the Graduate School will discuss the issue initially with the student, and then with an appropriate member of the School / Department provided the students agrees to this. In the majority of cases, this will be the Director of Postgraduate Research Studies who, if appropriate, will raise any concerns with the supervisor and/or Head of School/Department. Where a student is supervised by the Director of Postgraduate Research Studies and a supervisory issue is raised in the evaluation form, this will be discussed with and addressed via another nominated member of academic staff, who will in most cases be the Head of School or Department.

(l)   Schools and departments should provide appropriate opportunities for research student representation, although depending on the numbers of research students, this may simply involve including a research student representative on a School or departmental-wide Student-Staff Committee. See section 8 for further information on student engagement and representation.

(m)   Students should have easy access to the Head of School and/or the member of staff responsible for research students in the School, if they wish to discuss their progress or supervision with someone other than the supervisor(s).

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[6] Located within the 'monitoring and assessment' section of www.reading.ac.uk/graduateschool/currentstudents/gs-policiesandproceduresnew.aspx#gs_ppmonitoring

(n)   In the rare circumstance that the supervisory relationship breaks down, in the first instance the Head of School and/or the School Director of Postgraduate Research Studies should be informed and asked to investigate the situation, where appropriate involving the Head of the Doctoral Research Office. If the situation cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of both parties, then alternative supervisory arrangements should be made, if possible.

5.   Skills training and Learning Needs Analysis

(a)   Training should be provided for all research students, including those studying part-time or for a PhD by Distance. This training should involve both research skills specific to a particular subject area and also additional (also called transferable or generic) skills training. An appropriate doctoral training programme is provided at two levels: the Graduate School provides Institutional generic research and professional skills training, and Schools provide appropriate discipline level training. It is accepted that some smaller Schools may not have the student numbers or the resources to develop an effective training programme; in such cases it may be good practice for several similar Schools to combine.

(b)   At the start of a student's research programme, the Supervisor and the student should review the training needs of that student through a process of Learning Needs Analysis, identifying areas of existing competence and areas which will need further development in order to enhance the student's research abilities and personal development. Such analysis will inform the student's research training programme and will be an element of the formal reviews of progress. The current template for the assessment of training needs via Learning Needs Analysis is available at:

www.reading.ac.uk/GS_Learning Needs Analysis

Students should be encouraged to reflect at regular intervals on their development, using their Learning Needs Analysis as a basis; this will allow them to take the initiative in their development and to pursue their own learning opportunities.

(c)   Unless an approved exemption has been granted by the School Director of Postgraduate Research Studies, students are required to undertake at least a set minimum number of sessions on the Graduate School training programme each year. For full-time students, this is currently five courses in year 1, and three courses in each of years 2 and 3 (with the appropriate equivalent requirement for part-time students).

(d)   The Centre for Quality Support and Development, in collaboration with the Graduate School runs courses for research students who will be involved in teaching and / or demonstrating. Any research student employed by the University to support the teaching and learning of other students should receive appropriate training.

6.   The monitoring and assessment of progress

The following section is a formal summary of the University's policy relating to the monitoring and assessment of progress.

Further complementary guidance for students can be found in the Graduate School's more informal guide '*Keeping on track: how we monitor and assess your progress*', which can be found at: www.reading.ac.uk/graduateschool/currentstudents/gs-GuidesforStudentsnewpage.aspx

There is also guidance for staff involved in the process within the Graduate School's Good Practice Guide '*Monitoring and assessing the progress of doctoral researchers*', which can be found at: www.reading.ac.uk/graduateschool/supervisorsandresearchstaff/gs-GoodPracticeGuides(Staff)newpage.aspx

(a)   Schools, or where it is appropriate, Departments are responsible for monitoring the progress of research students, via an agreed 'monitoring team' or equivalent body. At least one member of this team should be independent of the student's supervisory arrangements. Schools may have their own additional guidelines on monitoring the progress of their research students that fit local needs, but it is a requirement that all research students should have their progress formally assessed at least on an annual basis. The process for this assessment should be communicated clearly and fully to research students and their supervisors. Such procedures should be operated rigorously, fairly, reliably and consistently.

(b)   There should be an annual review of the progress of each student by an agreed School or Department 'monitoring team', which, where necessary, will have regard to the University's procedures for Academic Engagement and Fitness to Study. In the first year of registration, the annual review should take place during the third term of registration. The annual review should comprise consideration of at least a separate written report from both the student and their supervisor. It should also include an evaluation by the student of their supervisory arrangements, as detailed in section 4(j). Students should also make at least two oral presentations of their work, to an appropriate audience within the School or Department, during the course of their programme. If a student fails to submit a written report within 2 weeks of the due date, and no extension has been agreed, they will be sent a warning letter from the Head of School to inform them that if they do not submit a report within 3 weeks (a total of 5 weeks from the original due date), they will be subject to the University's procedures for Academic Engagement and Fitness to Study.

(c)   As part of the annual review of process, School 'independent assessors' should produce a joint written report based on consideration of the reports from the student and the supervisor/s and preferably on meeting with the student in question. The report should comment on the student's progress to date and whether, in the opinion of the assessors, the work produced by the student is of a standard which indicates that it will lead to a successful submission within the maximum period of registration. Schools should retain copies of all reports (including evaluations of supervisory arrangements).

(d)   Where concerns are raised about a student's progress, a student should normally be given advice on how to improve their performance and a formal plan of remedial action with a timescale for completion should be drawn up and agreed by the student, their supervisor and the relevant Head of School. This action plan should be normally reviewed and the student re-interviewed, within three months of the original interview or the Part-time equivalent. Should this action plan not result in an improvement after the agreed period of time, then the School or Department (or nominee) should discuss the matter with the Head of the Doctoral Research Office, who will discuss possible ways forward, including invoking the University's Academic Engagement and Fitness to Study procedures, which may lead to the termination of the student's registration.

(e)   Schools should hold a complete set of records of progress on each student's file, including copies of individual report forms.

(f)   During the second year of registration (or part-time equivalent) and normally no later than the 5th term of registration, the School assessors should consider the evidence for confirmation of registration.

        The independent assessors will make a decision (or recommendation) on the basis of at least a written report from the student providing evidence of his or her research ability; students will normally be interviewed in person by the assessors as part of the assessment of progress. A written report should also be made by the student's supervisor/s, which should cover the following areas:

        i.   Whether progress is deemed to be satisfactory and, if not, what actions could be taken to ensure that progress becomes satisfactory
        ii.   The standard of any written work submitted
        iii.   Whether the student has given an oral presentation of his/her work to an appropriate audience within the School/Department since the last progress review
        iv.   The appropriateness of the training activities undertaken by the student with reference, where appropriate, to an initial Learning Needs Analysis

    v.   An anticipated completion date.

Recommendations for confirmation of registration (or otherwise) should be made on the basis of the following criteria:

a. Is the work presented by the student such as might reasonably be expected as a result of their having studied for the equivalent of around 12-18 months full-time for a PhD.
b. Has the student shown that he or she is able to exercise independent critical judgement.
c. Has the student demonstrated that he / she understands how his / her research topic is related to a wider field of knowledge.
d. Has the student demonstrated the ability to produce an original contribution to knowledge
e. Is the amount and nature of the subject-specific and generic research skills training that has been undertaken by the student appropriate to his / her needs, as identified through a Learning Needs Analysis or similar process.
f. Is the student's work, and his / her understanding of it, of a standard that indicates that it will lead to the successful submission of a PhD thesis within 3-4 years full-time registration (or part-time equivalent)

The outcomes of the confirmation of registration process will be either:

i. confirmation as a PhD candidate;
ii. an agreed plan of remedial action (following advice on how to improve) and an opportunity to provide a further report and be re-interviewed, to an agreed timescale, normally within 3 months of the original interview. This is the expected outcome if confirmation of registration is not agreed at the first attempt.
iii. recommendation for transfer of registration to MPhil, which will need to be approved by the Head of School; or
iv. recommendation for referral to the Head of School (via the School Director of PGR Studies), who will need to consider invoking the University's Policy on and procedures relating to PhD and MPhil student academic engagement and fitness to study, which can lead to de-registration from PGR programmes.

The student's supervisor/s will not be present when the decision on the confirmation of registration is made. The assessors will report the outcomes of the confirmation process to the School Director of PGR Studies. Pending any necessary approval of recommendations from the Head of School, the outcomes will also be communicated to the Doctoral Research Office.

(g) Where the confirmation process has resulted in a student not being assigned to the degree programme which he or she sought, they may appeal against that decision. They should lodge such an appeal with the Head of the Doctoral Research Office within two weeks of receiving this decision. The appeal will be considered by a panel comprising the Dean of Postgraduate Research Studies, a senior member of the Academic Staff of the student's School, and a senior member of the Academic Staff drawn from another School. These members of Academic Staff should have experience of supervising research students and of the confirmation of registration process. The Appeal Committee may either:

(i) Reject the appeal;
(ii) Uphold the appeal, and confirm registration as 'PhD'; or
(iii) Uphold the appeal, but the student be subject to a further confirmation of registration procedure no later than three months after the first such procedure

The decision of the Appeal Committee will be final.

A detailed description of this appeals process is available at:

www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/graduateschool/pgr_COR_appeals_sept2018.pdf

(h) Illness, changes in family circumstances, or other exceptional circumstances sometimes make it difficult or inappropriate for a student to continue their research. Given the requirements of sponsors that students should complete their theses within a given time

period, it is sometimes appropriate for the student and the University that a suspension of registration is agreed. Students and/or an appropriate member of staff should initially contact their School Director of Postgraduate Research Studies to discuss the matter informally.

Suspensions are approved by the Dean of Postgraduate Research Studies, in accordance with the relevant regulations and procedures. The period of time permitted for a suspension should not normally exceed 12 months in any one instance, and should not normally exceed 12 months for the duration of the degree. In very exceptional circumstances, further periods of suspension may be granted, but the total period of suspension throughout the duration of the degree shall not normally exceed 24 months.

Extensions beyond the University's stated maximum period of candidature are only permitted in exceptional circumstances. Extensions are approved by the Dean of Postgraduate Research Studies, subject to the relevant regulations and procedures. Requests for extensions will normally only be considered if submitted at least 28 days prior to the maximum registration date.

At the point at which their minimum period of registration has passed, students will be sent a reminder by email of the need to complete within the maximum time allowed. They will be sent a further such reminder three months prior to their maximum registration date. If a student does not submit by the required date and no extension has been agreed, that student will be informed within 14 days of the expiry of their maximum registration date that their registration has been terminated. In any such case, the student may appeal the decision under the University's procedures for *Appeals against termination of registration resulting from failure to submit a thesis by the Maximum Registration Date*. Full detail of this appeal process is available at:

www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/graduateschool/pgrterminationappeals.pdf

Full detail on the regulations and procedures to be followed in regard to suspensions and extensions is available at:

www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/graduateschool/resstudentsuspandext.pdf

(i)   With regard to annual leave, research student programmes do not usually follow terms in the conventional sense, nor do they have set working hours. Similarly, the differing requirements of disciplines and types of research make the determination of appropriate holiday and similarly working hours for research students difficult to prescribe. The University expects that students and supervisors should arrive at mutually acceptable arrangements, which ensure that the student maintains an appropriate work/recreation balance to achieve the research objectives. Accordingly, the following guidelines on annual leave are provided:

Full-time research students are entitled, with the prior agreement of their supervisors, to take up to 8 weeks' holiday each year including public holidays and University closure periods.

Part-time research students are entitled, with the prior agreement of their supervisors, to take up to 8 weeks' holiday each year pro rata, including public holidays and University closure periods.

For those students in receipt of Research Council or other external funding, due attention should be paid to the rules governing leave arrangements for those bodies.

(j)   Monitoring of the progress of part-time and PhD by Distance students will follow similar procedures to the above. Part-time students will be expected to provide evidence of their research ability before confirmation of registration (see section 6(f)) can be permitted and they should also be expected to give an annual oral presentation on their work. Whilst PhD by Distance students may not necessarily be expected to give an annual presentation (unless in Reading at the appropriate time), they should provide an annual written report on their work, and particularly before any confirmation of registration is agreed.

7. Academic Integrity and Academic Misconduct

Research students are expected to uphold the University's expected standards on academic integrity and academic misconduct. Further information is available on the Graduate School website[2].

8. Examinations

(a) The document entitled *Rules for Submission of Theses for Higher Degrees* sets out the University's requirements and procedures in respect of:

- Notification of intention to submit a thesis
- Format and length of theses
- Procedures for submission
- Summary of the examination process

The *Rules for Submission* are available at:

www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/graduateschool/1_pgr_rules_for_submission_of_thes es.pdf

(b) The appointment of Internal and External Examiners is subject to the approval of the Dean of Postgraduate Research Studies. It is a requirement that at least one of the Examiners should be external to the University and that they should have considerable academic expertise in the field which they are examining. They should not be a recent or current collaborator of the supervisor or research student. Members of staff in Partner or Associated institutions may act as an external examiner provided they have not been a recent collaborator.

The maximum number of Higher Degree examinations which an External Examiner should normally undertake in a period of five years in respect of candidates with the same internal supervisor is two. The Dean of Postgraduate Research Studies may, in exceptional circumstances, permit this number to be exceeded.

(c) The *Guide for Examiners for Higher Degrees by Thesis*, which is sent to the Internal and External Examiners of a thesis on their appointment and to the Supervisor, sets out the University's requirements and procedures in respect of:

- Arrangements for viva voce examination, including provisions for an Independent Chair and the attendance of the supervisor
- Process for advising candidate of progress with examination arrangements
- Provisions for Examiners to exchange with each other preliminary views through pre-viva reports
- Results available for the Examination for a Higher Degree by Thesis
- Preparation of Examiners' Reports following the viva
- Appointment of an External Adjudicator in the event of an irreconcilable difference between the Examiners

The *Guides for Examiners of Research Degrees* are available at:

www.reading.ac.uk/graduateschool/currentstudents/gs-ExaminationsForResearchDegrees.aspx

(d) In determining a recommended result, Examiners are required to consider the following:

(i) Whether the form in which the thesis is presented is appropriate;

(ii)   Whether the work presented by the candidate is such as might reasonably be expected as the result of one year's full-time postgraduate work (for LLM), two years' full-time postgraduate work (for MPhil), and three years' full-time postgraduate work (for PhD);

(iii)   Is the abstract of the thesis acceptable (a) as it is, or (b) with some modifications?

(iv)   Does the candidate understand how his/her special theme is related to a wider field of knowledge?

(e)   Criteria for PhD

- the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, to extend the forefront of their discipline, and to merit publication in an appropriate form
- a systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of the discipline or area of professional practice
- the general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and the ability to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems
- a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship.

Criteria for MPhil / LLM

- a systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and / or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study or area of professional practice
- a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship
- originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline
- conceptual understanding that enables the student to do each of the following:

  - to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline
  - to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.
  -

(f)   The recommendations available to the Examiners are:

(i)   **For PhDs**

        PhD awarded

        No corrections are required. The recommendation will be reported to the next meeting of Senate.

        PhD awarded, subject to minor amendments being made

The Internal Examiner is responsible for advising the student as to what corrections are required, and will inform the Doctoral Examinations Officer that the corrections have been made satisfactorily. The recommendation will then be sent to the next Senate. <u>Minor amendments do not count as a re-examination.</u>

Minor amendments should normally be carried out within three months of the date of notification of the result. In certain circumstances (for example, if a student has difficult personal circumstances, or is working full-time) the Examiners can make a request (for approval by the Dean of Postgraduate Research Studies) that the student be permitted up to six months to complete the minor amendments. Additionally, where a candidate has been diagnosed as having dyslexia or dyspraxia, he or she may request six months in which to complete the amendments.

If the candidate does not complete the minor amendments within the period allowed, a result of Failed can be returned. Extensions to the period can be granted by the Dean of Postgraduate Research Studies if exceptional circumstances arise during the three month period.

Decision Deferred (Major amendments)

The candidate is required to make major amendments. Examiners are asked to provide written comments for the candidate's guidance within one month of the oral examination. These comments should be sent to the Doctoral Examinations Officer for forwarding to the candidate and to the candidate's supervisor(s). The candidate has 12 months to make these amendments. Extensions to this period can be granted by the Dean of Postgraduate Research Studies in exceptional circumstances. When the amendments have been completed, copies of the thesis are submitted to the Doctoral Examinations Officer who forwards the copies to the Examiners in the usual way. The Examiners may then make their recommendation.

<u>Major amendments do not count as a re-examination.</u> However, where major amendments have been undertaken, both the External and the Internal Examiner must review the thesis to ensure that the amendments have been carried out to a satisfactory standard. The Examiners may wish to require Minor amendments at this stage. The Examiners may not recommend further major amendments. Where major amendments are not made within 12 months, a result of Failed may be returned.

PhD Fail result: Recommendation to award an MPhil.

If the candidate has not met the criteria to be awarded the PhD, but has met the criteria for the degree of MPhil, the examiners can recommend to Senate that the candidate be offered the degree of MPhil (with or without minor corrections).

After a report making the alternative recommendation has been approved by Senate, the Doctoral Examinations Officer will write to the student notifying him / her of the result and offering the option of accepting the MPhil or re-submitting for the PhD (provided the thesis is not a re-submission).

The student will have three months from the date of that letter to accept the MPhil and, if minor corrections were required, to make the amendments and resubmit the thesis. Alternatively, the student can notify the Doctoral Examinations Officer within this three month period of his / her intention to resubmit for the PhD. He / she will be permitted to present themselves for re-examination on one further occasion within three calendar years. Candidates will be advised of the exact deadline by the Doctoral Examinations Officer.

PhD Fail result: No degree awarded

If the candidate has not met the criteria to be awarded the PhD or the MPhil, the recommendation of Fail: No degree awarded will be forwarded to Senate for approval. Following approval, the candidate will be notified of the outcome by the Doctoral Examinations Officer and informed that he / she will be permitted to present themselves for re-examination on one further occasion within three calendar years. Candidates will be advised of the exact deadline by the Doctoral Examinations Officer.

(ii)   For MPhil/LLM

The recommendations available for the MPhil and LLM are the same as for PhD (a) above, except that no alternative degree can be awarded.

(g)   For Professional Doctorate and PhD by Published Works degrees, candidates should consult the relevant programme specification for specific criteria and possible recommendations available to the examiners.

(h)   Where a student considers that there are grounds for believing the result of the examination to be unfair (other than those relating to the academic judgement of the Examiners), he or she may appeal to the Senate Standing Committee on Examination Results. Information on the process for appeal is available at:

www.reading.ac.uk/graduateschool/currentstudents/gs-ExaminationsForResearchDegrees.aspx

9.   Student engagement and representation

Postgraduate research student engagement and representation occurs on a number of different levels within the University, as follows:

(a)   Within Schools, it is normal practice that one or more research students sit on the appropriate board or committee where postgraduate research matters are discussed. Each School / Department is encouraged to nominate a specific postgraduate research student (PGR) representative, who is also responsible for liaising with the Graduate School (see below). The roles and responsibilities of these representatives are set out in the Graduate School guidelines, available at:

www.reading.ac.uk/web/FILES/graduateschool/student_reps_guidelines.pdf

(b)   At a University level, the main form of engagement and representation occurs through the termly meetings of the PGR Representatives Forum, organised by the Graduate School. School / Department representatives bring items to the meetings and provide feedback on the training programme and other events and initiatives. The minutes of these meetings are received by the University Committee on Postgraduate Research Studies;

(c)   The Reading University Students Union (RUSU) employs a part-time Postgraduate Student Officer to provide focussed support for postgraduate students (both taught and research) during their university experience. This officer, along with the RUSU Vice-President (Academic Affairs), sits on the University Committee on Postgraduate Research Studies.

10.   Complaints and appeals

(a)   Students who feel that their work is not progressing satisfactorily should discuss the position with their supervisor. If (for whatever reason) they do not wish to raise the matter with their supervisor they should consult the Head of School. Where the Head

of School is also the supervisor, students should consult the appropriate School Director of Postgraduate Research Studies.

Students who have a complaint about the adequacy of the supervision they are receiving or about any other matters affecting their research should consult the Head of School. Such complaints must be taken up in this way; they may not form the basis of an appeal by the student against subsequent failure.

If a student feels that it would be inappropriate for any reason to consult the Head of School, or if such consultation proves to be unsatisfactory, the advice of the Head of the Doctoral Research Office should be sought in the first instance.

(b)   The University also has formal procedures dealing with student complaints and appeals, which are applicable to research students. Information relating to these procedures should be included in any Handbooks issued to research students and in the material issued as part of the University-wide inductions.

11.   Further Requirements for Students studying at a distance from the University

(a)   The Dean of Postgraduate Research Studies is responsible for considering cases for PhD by Distance status.

(b)   Where such status has been agreed, the ultimate responsibility for students' supervision and training, and for ensuring that their thesis is submitted on time and is of an appropriate standard will rest primarily with the University. This will be the case even where day-to-day supervision and/or support will be provided by an external organisation.

(c)   Students who are registered as PhD by Distance are normally required to be in attendance at Reading for the first four weeks of the first term and for a total of three months over the course of their entire programme, as a minimum. This allows such students to undertake induction and research training and also attend for Confirmation of Registration and to prepare for and attend their viva.   Examination of a research student should take place in Reading.

(d)   Before PhD by Distance status is agreed, a student, in consultation with their supervisor, should complete a Learning Needs Assessment to identify training needs and how and where these should be met.

(e)   The student and supervisor must also agree upon, and sign, a written 'learning agreement', setting out:

- the responsibilities of both sides during the period that the student is studying away from the University;
- how the supervisory relationship will work;
- how communication is to be maintained during the 'working-away' period; and
- the timing, duration, and funding of any supervisory visit.

(f)   Schools should choose with care the institution at which such students are to work. These institutions should normally have experience of student supervision. There should also normally be academic research links between the particular institution and the School. It is the responsibility of the School to ensure that a student will receive the best possible training and academic and pastoral care.

(g)   Students studying for PhD by Distance should be allocated at least one local supervisor or mentor with experience in the academic field and also of supporting students.