Research Degrees Regulations

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Summary

These regulations should not be read in isolation. It is important that you read them in conjunction with the Code of Practice for Student Discipline, the Research Degrees Handbooks and other relevant documents referred to in the text including:

- Conditions of Registration for Postgraduate Research Students
- Recruitment guidelines for directly supported students
- Research Degrees Prospectus
- The Open University thesis submission guidelines
- Postgraduate Students Research Students (Directly Supported) Fee Rules/ Postgraduate Students Research Students (Affiliated Research Centre) Fee Rules
- Research Code of Practice
- Academic Engagement & Attendance Policy

These are available through the Graduate School Network.

The Research degree regulations form part of your contract with the university.

If you have any questions about the Research degree regulations, please contact the Research Degrees Team.

Principles

1. The Research degree regulations are the principal means through which The Open University ensures consistency in academic standards across the research degree programmes that it offers.
2. The Open University's Research degree regulations are the definitive statement on the regulatory framework governing research degrees at The Open University. In the event of any discrepancy between these regulations and any other documentation pertaining to research degrees, the Research degree regulations will take precedence.

3. Policies are inclusive of all Open University Students, Learners, Enquirers and Alumni, regardless of age, civil status, dependency or caring status, care experience, disability, family status, gender, gender identity, gender reassignment, marital status, marriage and civil partnerships, membership of the Traveller community, political opinion, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, socio-economic background, sex, sexual orientation or trades union membership status.

4. The regulations that apply to you are those that are in force at the time of the event to which they refer, for example:

   - upon application
   - when you register and/or re-register
   - when you are examined or re-examined.

   The university will give reasonable notice of the changes to the regulations and the date they take effect.

5. The term ‘Faculty’ is used to indicate both Faculties and Faculty-level institutes as appropriate.

6. The Open University shall award the following research degrees to candidates registered directly with the university, or to those registered through an Affiliated Research Centre (or Research Degrees Committee agreed collaboration), upon successful completion of approved programmes of advanced supervised research:

   - Master of Philosophy
   - Doctor of Philosophy
   - Professional Doctorate (Doctorate in Education & Doctorate in Health and Social Care)
   - Doctor of Philosophy by Published Work.

7. The Open University may award Higher Doctorates in recognition of a substantial body of original research undertaken over the course of many years:

- Doctor of Letters
- Doctor of Science.

8. Programmes of research may be proposed in any field of study in which:

   a) The university or its Affiliated Research Centres or similar organisations with which the university has an agreement to offer its research degrees, is in a position to provide or ensure discipline specific expertise, resources and subject appropriate supervision;

   b) Where the proposed programme is capable of leading to the presentation of a piece of research for assessment by examiners at the appropriate level. The written thesis may be supplemented by material that is not in written form.

9. The Open University's research degrees are awarded to candidates who have demonstrated that they have met the outcomes specified in the QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (see Appendix 1)

10. Research degrees at The Open University are not credit bearing. No staged or incremental credit will be awarded.

11. The Open University encourages research collaboration with industrial, commercial or professional bodies which support research programmes leading to the award of a research degree. The intention of such collaborations is to:

   a) encourage outward-looking, impactful research;

   b) widen opportunity and participation;

   c) provide the student with access to a network of researchers with the experience and expertise to advise them in the development and design of their research project;

d) enable the student to become a part of a wider research community.

e) enable the student to access facilities or other appropriate resources.

f) It is imperative that a contract is in place prior to student registration

Collaborative provision includes Affiliated Research Centres, Doctoral Training Partnerships and Research Degrees Student Partnerships. Programmes of collaborative provision require prior approval from the relevant bodies within the governance and management structure.

12. Where a research degree project is part of a piece of funded research, The Open University Graduate School shall ensure due diligence and establish, to its satisfaction, that the terms on which the research is funded do not impede the candidates' fulfilment of the requirements for the research degree.

13. Candidates for research degrees and Higher Doctorates are liable for fees at the point of registration and each academic year thereafter.

14. These regulations will be subject to review as and when appropriate, normally on an annual basis.

Changes to the Regulations

1. The circumstances in which we may make changes

As completion of a research degree normally takes several years, it may be necessary to make changes in the relationship between the university and its students during that time. The university may amend regulations and rules or the way in which it applies them from time to time to:

- Improve the experience of students
- Ensure the efficient and economic use of university resources
- Comply with changes in legal or regulatory requirements
- Maintain the reputation, good standing and academic standards of the university

- Correct errors or improve clarity and accessibility of the regulations
- Take advantage of new technologies, methods, ideas and opportunities.

2. How changes will be made

Where such changes are to be made, the university will follow its rules for governance approval of those changes including, where appropriate, consultation with students or their representative bodies.

3. Notice of changes

The university will give reasonable notice of changes to the regulations and rules, and the date that they will take effect.

4. Students in Secure Environments

Adjustments to research degrees regulations necessary to support students in secure environments will be considered by Progress Board on a case-by-case basis.

Changes to Qualifications

1. Changes in the structure or study requirements of a Qualification

a) To ensure that research degrees remain valid, relevant and current, and/or to enhance the student experience, the university may make changes to the structure of its qualifications. These may include such matters as: the duration of the qualification, the balance between interim assessment and final examination or other forms and types of assessment, the order of study and rules for progression through the qualification, the requirements for attendance at or participation in specified learning activities.

b) The university will give reasonable notice of changes to the structure or study requirements of a Qualification, and the date they take effect.

c) The notice period may be reduced if it is necessary to comply with the requirements of a professional, statutory, or regulatory body.

d) If you are unable to complete your qualification within the notice period, you will be able to obtain advice and guidance to help you reach a reasonable solution.

2. Withdrawal of Qualifications

a) In line with its aim to ensure that courses remain valid, relevant and current, the university may withdraw qualifications that will cease to meet those requirements. The university may also withdraw a qualification if it has become uneconomic to continue to offer that qualification or if the university has made a strategic decision to change how it is delivered.

b) If you are registered for a qualification and the university has approved the withdrawal of that qualification, you will be given reasonable notice of the withdrawal and a reasonable opportunity to complete your study for it before it is withdrawn, subject to the continued availability of the required resources.

3. Interpretation of the regulations

Formal interpretation of these regulations is within the remit of the Postgraduate Research Student Progress and Awards Board (Progress Board). The findings of the Progress Board are binding.

a) Notwithstanding (1) above, formal interpretation of the regulations by the Progress Board will not be deemed to have established a precedent upon which future cases must be judged.

b) Formal interpretation of the regulations made by the Progress Board must be reported to the Research Degrees Committee.

c) Waiver of the regulations is within the remit of the Progress Board. In exceptional cases, where a case has been proven to the satisfaction of the Progress Board, under Chair's Action a regulation may be waived. Such waivers will not set a precedent for future action.

d) The Open University research degree provision values diversity and promotes equality of opportunity. The regulations have been written from this perspective. However, if there is an issue arising from an individual student case where the regulations are in conflict with adjustments and accommodations required, a case for reasonable adjustment may be made to the Progress Board for a waiver of regulations at any point in the student's registration.

e) Where a student has registered a disability with the university or registered caring responsibilities the Reasonable Adjustment Regulations may be applied.

f) Where the application of a regulation to a particular case requires authorisation by the Progress Board, Associate Dean Research, Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator or Head of School, it is understood that the relevant officer may delegate approval as appropriate.

4. Informal interpretation

Informal advice on the interpretation of these regulations and associated policy by any person, committee or group other than the Progress Board shall have no formal binding authority.

Research degree qualification regulations specifically for Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy

1. Degree Name and Standards

RD 1.1 The Open University shall award the degrees of Master of Philosophy (referred to as MPhil) and Doctor of Philosophy (referred to as PhD) to registered candidates (including those registered through Affiliated Research Centres) upon successful completion of approved programmes of advanced supervised research. Holders of these qualifications are permitted, following award, to use the letters MPhil or PhD as appropriate after their names.

RD 1.2 A Master of Philosophy degree may be awarded to a candidate who has demonstrated, through the presentation and defence of a thesis, to the satisfaction of the examiners, that the expectations outlined in Appendix 1, 1.1 have been met.

RD 1.3 A Doctor of Philosophy degree may be awarded to a candidate who has demonstrated, through the presentation and defence of a thesis, to the satisfaction of the examiners that the expectations outlined in Appendix 1, 1.2 have been met.

2. Requirements for Application

RD 2.1 An applicant seeking admission to the degree of MPhil or MPhil with the possibility of transfer to PhD should hold the minimum of an upper second-class honours degree, or a Master's degree in an appropriate cognate area from a UK university or other recognised degree-awarding body. The comparability of qualifications from outside the UK with The Open University requirements will be determined through reference to UK ENIC.

RD 2.2 Applicants holding qualifications other than those in RD 2.1 must demonstrate suitability for postgraduate level research based on professional experience, publications, written reports or other appropriate evidence of previous research related to the proposed PhD application shall be taken into consideration. In addition, applicants must provide the names of qualified persons from whom the university may seek references as to the applicants' academic attainment and potential for undertaking research at this level. Applicants who do not hold any degree level qualifications will not be admitted and will not be eligible for consideration.

RD 2.3 Applicants may apply for admission on either a full-time or a part-time basis, dependent upon the requirements of any funding body.

RD 2.4 Where English is not the applicant's first language, the applicant must demonstrate sufficient proficiency in the English language to support successful study at research degree standard. It is usual to require IELTS scores that meet the minimum requirements of 6.5 overall score, and no less than 6.0 in any of the four elements (reading, writing, listening and speaking), or equivalent. Certificates must be no older than 2 years at the point of registration. Exceptions may be approved by the Progress Board upon the provision of equivalent evidence by the Faculty or the Affiliated Research Centre.

RD 2.5 Applicants for research degrees in a particular discipline may be required to fulfil additional entry requirements. These may include discipline specific knowledge, a higher minimum English language requirement, a professional qualification and/or equivalent experience. Discipline specific requirements are published in the Research Degrees Prospectus. Affiliated Research Centre specific requirements are published in each Affiliated Research Centre's recruitment documentation.

RD 2.6 The university can only accept applications for study in an approved field of research for which arrangements have been made in respect of either subject and/or methodological specific supervision and for which research facilities are available. Projects must be well-defined and must be completable within the regulatory timeframes (RD 7.4). The approved fields of research are revised annually and can be found in the Research Degrees Prospectus. The approved fields of research for applicants registering through the Affiliated Research Centre programme will be determined by their Affiliated Research Centre.

RD 2.7 The university may accept applications for a programme of study from which the outputs will include significant material that would not be traditionally incorporated into a "book", for example audio or video files, datasets, large visual files such as drawings or, maps, code, software or digital renditions of physical artifacts (together "non-text outputs"). The outputs must be submitted as digital files for examination and digital archiving and should normally be submitted as common file formats. The requirements for the thesis in terms of argument, analysis, deployment of evidence and referencing are the same as for a thesis that does not contain these additional non-text outputs (see RD 17.7 to RD 17.9). The balance of evidence and argument in the research proposal shall reflect the anticipated balance between the written and non-text outputs that together contribute the final submission portfolio with approval of the Progress Board.

RD 2.8 Applicants must assign their intellectual property rights arising from research undertaken that contributes to the research degree to The Open University unless they are bound by an intellectual property agreement with a third party. Any such agreements must be brought to the attention of the university and approved at the point of application.

3. Admission

RD 3.1 Faculties and Affiliated Research Centres are responsible for managing the recruitment and fair selection of research students in accordance with the QAA Quality Code, the Equality Act 2010, and the Recruitment Guidelines and where applicable the equality legislation in the Affiliated Research Centre's country of location.

RD 3.2 A selection panel Chair is responsible for ensuring procedural integrity of the whole recruitment and selection process. They are also responsible for ensuring that panel members and all staff involved in the recommendations for admission have undertaken the required training including unconscious bias and fair selection. A selection panel will include a minimum of two members, one of whom provides continuity of recruitment within the discipline, and one who is a potential member of the supervisory team or who provides subject expertise.

RD 3.3 All applicants must supply the following evidence in support of their application:

a) a completed application form

b) copies of their degree certificates

c) a copy of their research proposal, or a statement confirming suitability for registration, or a project description as requested by the Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre, noting that in some areas of the university applications are made to specific advertised projects.

d) a copy of their passport, or other form of identification. Accepted documents include (Proof of Identity checklist):

- Original birth certificate (UK birth certificate issued within 12 months of the date of birth in full form including those issued by UK authorities overseas such as Embassies High Commissions and HM Forces)
- EEA member state identity card
- Current UK or EEA photo card driving licence
- Full old-style driving licence
- Photographic registration cards for self-employed individuals in the construction industry -CIS4
- Benefit book or original notification letter from Benefits Agency
- Firearms or shotgun certificate
- Residence permit issued by the Home Office to EEA nationals on sight of own country passport
- National identity card bearing a photograph of the applicant.

e) the names and contact details of two independent referees

f) equal opportunities and Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) monitoring form.

In respect of Affiliated Research Centre students items b) d) e) must be checked and verified by the Affiliated Research Centre.

In addition, and where applicable the following documentation must also be submitted:

g) transcripts of academic qualifications

h) certified translations of degree certificates and transcripts

i) copies of English language qualification certificates

j) copies of UK visas and biometric card

k) list of publications or evidence of research experience

l) documentation supporting a change of name.

RD 3.4 No applicant may be admitted without prior interview and the receipt by the university of the references.

RD 3.5 To be admitted as a research student of the university an applicant must:

a) comply with regulations RD 2.1 to RD 2.8 as appropriate

b) register in accordance with the instructions contained within their offer letter

c) agree to comply with the Conditions of Registration for Postgraduate Research Students, the Research Code of Practice, the Research Degrees Regulations and all policies relevant to the student journey, and or any updates to these throughout the period of registration

d) agree to comply with the registration requirements and attend induction in person

e) pay or agree to pay the appropriate fees and charges

f) if a visa is required it must be appropriate and valid as per UKVI requirements.

RD 3.6 In addition to the above for applicants seeking direct registration with The Open University regulations RD 3.7 to RD 3.9 apply; for applicants seeking registration with The Open University through an Affiliated Research Centre regulations RD 3.10 to RD 3.12 apply.

Direct registration

RD 3.7 Formal applications must be submitted to the relevant Faculty office. This does not preclude any preliminary discussion between an applicant and academic members of the Faculty. Having followed the recruitment process the faculty may make a recommendation for admission to the Progress Board. The faculty may inform applicants that they have made such a recommendation, but they cannot make any offers of registration, formal or informal, at this stage.

RD 3.8 Prior to applications being considered by the Progress Board they will be screened by the Research Degrees Team to ensure that applicants have met the entrance requirements and, for international students, satisfy the requirements of UK Visa and Immigration.

RD 3.9 Approval for admission is granted by the Progress Board. In addition to the regulatory requirements any other terms and conditions will be provided in the offer letter.

Registration through an Affiliated Research Centre

RD 3.10 Formal applications must be made to the Affiliated Research Centre. This does not preclude any preliminary discussion between an applicant and academic members of the Affiliated Research Centre. If approved by the Affiliated Research Centre, the application for registration will then be forwarded to the Research Degrees Team for consideration by the Progress Board. Having followed the recruitment process the Affiliated Research Centre may inform applicants that they have made such a recommendation, but they cannot make any offers of registration, formal or informal, at this stage.

RD 3.11 Prior to applications being considered by the Progress Board they will be screened by the Research Degrees Team to ensure that applicants have met the entrance requirements and, for relevant international students, satisfy the requirements of UK Visa and Immigration.

RD 3.12 Approval for admission is granted by the Progress Board following a recommendation by ARC Management Group. In addition to the regulatory requirements any other terms and conditions of registration with the university will be provided in the offer letter.

4. Transfer of Registration

RD 4.1 Transfers of registration from another university or institution to The Open University is permitted where a student has previously been supervised by someone who has become a member of The Open University academic staff, provided that the following information is supplied, and the contents therein approved by the Faculty and the Progress Board:

a) The title of the research project and the contact details of the supervisors and any sponsors.

b) A copy of the student's original application to the other university or institution (this should include those documents referred to in RD 3.3).

c) The date of the original registration and the registration period required to completion, this should include details of periods of study break.

d) An indication of the resources required to support the research project.

e) Copies of the reports and feedback marking academic milestones (e.g., upgrade/transfer from MPhil to PhD, progress reports) to date.

f) A letter of agreement from the university or institution where the candidate is currently registered and, where applicable, any sponsor approving the transfer of registration and any intellectual property rights to The Open University.

RD 4.2 In exceptional cases The Open University may also accept applications for transfer from individuals who are not moving with their existing supervisor provided that supervisory expertise within the relevant field has been secured.

In such cases in addition to providing the information, outlined in RD 4.1 above, the contents therein approved by the Faculty and the Progress Board, the student must fulfil the requirements outlined in RD 2.1 to RD 3.12 as appropriate.

RD 4.3 Approval for admission via transfer from another university or institution is granted by the Progress Board. In addition to the regulatory requirements any other terms and conditions will be provided in the offer letter.

RD 4.4 The transfer of registration will normally be at the equivalent stage in the research degree programme, as closely as equivalence can be determined. This will also apply to the duration of registration.

5. Supervision

RD 5.1 Upon admission students will be allocated a supervisory team. The team will be nominated by the Associate Dean Research in consultation with relevant stakeholders or in the case of students registered through the Affiliated Research Centres the Research Degrees Coordinator. The Progress Board considers and approves the appointment of supervisors upon admission and when any further changes are required. Students are not permitted to select their own supervisory team.

RD 5.2 Supervisory teams comprise a minimum of two internal supervisors who are members of the university's academic staff, or a member of academic staff from a Doctoral Training Partner. Additional external supervisors may be appointed where appropriate. The constitution of supervisory teams for students registered through an Affiliated Research Centre must comprise a minimum of two supervisors, at least one internal to the Affiliated Research Centre.

RD 5.3 Where the supervisory team includes an external supervisor it is the responsibility of the internal supervisor(s) to:

a) Ensure that the external supervisor is carrying out their responsibilities to the student and to the university, this includes contributing to progress monitoring reports and ensuring that they are submitted at the required time.

b) Meet the student with the external supervisor face to face to discuss the research project for part-time students at least once a year or at least three times in the case of full-time students. Face to face meetings should be in person; however where this is impracticable other arrangements for synchronous meetings may be used such as video conference, Skype or telephone.

RD 5.4 External supervisors must abide by the university's contractual confidentiality statement (Appendix 5) and with any terms and conditions associated with any funding arrangements.

RD 5.5 Supervisors must meet all of the following criteria:

a) Hold an appointment as a member of academic staff, or a research fellow, at The Open University, or an Affiliated Research Centre, and be actively researching. For external supervisors at another university, they must hold an appointment as a member of academic staff and be actively researching as a member of a research group of appropriate academic standing.

b) Possess current academic expertise in the chosen discipline. Current expertise will be evidenced by their CV.

c) Hold a doctorate. The expectation is that supervisors will have a research degree (usually a PhD or Professional Doctorate) or for some disciplines, supervisors may have demonstrated significant engagement within their research or practice field in the absence of a research degree, as evidenced by their CV. Such variances require approval in advance by the Progress Board.

d) Have sufficient time to carry out their responsibilities in the provision of quality supervision and support for students.

e) Are willing to commit to providing supervision for the duration of the student's studies.

f) Have read and confirmed their understanding of these regulations and of any updates.

The supervisory team collectively must have experience of supervising at least one UK PhD from the point of registration to successful completion and at least one member of the team must be an active researcher involved in research within their chosen discipline as evidenced through peer reviewed outputs.

RD 5.6 One of the supervisors internal to the university or the Affiliated Research Centre will be the lead supervisor and will take day to day responsibility for the administrative issues and processes required for student registration, progression, submission and completion within the time frames outlined within these regulations. The lead supervisor for students registered at an ARC is termed 'Director of Studies'. Where the lead supervisor does not have experience of supervising a UK PhD student to successful completion (RD 5.5) the supervisor on the team with the requisite UK PhD experience must act as a mentor to the lead supervisor. Regardless of experience or role it is the responsibility of all supervisors to ensure to the best of their ability that they work with the student to ensure that all elements of a student's registration, including submission and completion are understood and undertaken within the regulatory timescales.

RD 5.7 Supervisors should not be registered for a research degree themselves other than a Higher Doctorate, nor should they be in a close personal relationship with the student they are supervising. Supervisors should not normally be in a close personal relationship with any other member of the supervision team, nor should there be any other significant conflict of interest (see Appendix 4 or a non-exhaustive list). Where a potential conflict of interest exists or develops during the course of the student's research degree registration, the supervisor(s) must declare this, for consideration by the Progress Board.

RD 5.8 Research fellows (including post-doctoral researchers), emeritus professors, and honorary associates of the Open University may be appointed as internal supervisors (not as external supervisors), provided that they and the other members of the supervisory team meet the requirements of RD 5.5. Associate Lecturers may be appointed as supervisors on a separate contract provided that they have a substantive academic position or are contracted to undertake research at the Open University or another organisation. Visiting academics may be appointed as external supervisors on a separate contract. Those appointed as supervisors for Affiliated Research Centre students must have a contract for supervision with the Affiliated Research Centre. With the exception of academic staff who can, through their associate status, demonstrate that they are contributing to research activities in the university or Affiliated Research Centre, retired members of staff are not eligible to join supervisory teams at the start of a new studentship, but may continue to supervise to completion any students registered at the time of retirement providing the supervisory team as a whole is regulatory.

RD 5.9 Students are expected to have regular formal scheduled meetings with their supervisors. These formal meetings should result in an agreed set of supervisory notes that record the discussion. Meetings should be held with the following frequency:

a) Full-time students should have a formal meeting with their internal supervisor(s) a minimum of ten times per year. This should normally be face to face (in person).

b) Part-time students should have a formal meeting with their internal supervisor(s) a minimum of five times per year. This may be remote but efforts should be made to ensure that some of the meetings are face to face (in person)

Informal meetings, without the obligations for an agreed set of notes, can be held as required. Regardless, supervisors should keep sufficient notes to provide an accurate record of the student's journey. Meeting notes should be stored on the agreed management system.

RD 5.10 Where a supervisor is absent for a period of three months or more alternative supervisory arrangements must be put in place and approved by the Progress Board. Upon the return of a supervisor following such a period of extended leave, discussions must take place with the Associate Dean Research or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator, as appropriate, regarding the viability of them resuming the role.

All changes to any supervisory team must be approved by the Progress Board. Whilst students may request a change to their supervisory team, this is not guaranteed and appointment of new supervisors cannot be initiated by the student.

RD 5.11 Faculties and Affiliated Research Centres are responsible for allocating sufficient time for supervisors to carry out the duties required for quality supervision and support of students.

RD 5.12 Supervisors are required to undertake initial training within the first 12 months of beginning the role within the university or within the Affiliated Research Centre, and then after every four years. This includes experienced supervisors who are new to the university or Affiliated Research Centre as well as supervisors who are new to the role. All supervisors are required to meet the expectations of the Research Degrees Committee with regard to their continued professional development as outlined in Appendix 2.

RD 5.13 Students and supervisors are expected to abide by the Code of practice for supervisors and research students see Appendix 2 and the Supervisor Policy.

6. Independent Advisor

RD 6.1 Within one month of registration students will be formally notified by their academic unit or discipline as to the name and contact details of their Independent Advisor.

RD 6.2 The Independent Advisor is appointed by the Associate Dean Research, or for those students registered through an Affiliated Research Centre, the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator.

RD 6.3 The requirements for Independent Advisors are as follows:

a) Independent Advisors must be members of academic staff and have some research degree supervision experience.

b) Independent Advisors should not be senior officers of The Open University or the Affiliated Research Centre with responsibility for the research degree programme.

c) Independent Advisors must act in the best interests of the student, irrespective of any professional or social relationship with either the student or the supervisors.

d) Independent Advisors must be offered to all new students by the fifth month of their registration and then annually in the first quarter of the calendar year (January - March).

e) Independent Advisors should be available for consultation by the student throughout the year.

f) For full-time students, Independent Advisors must involve a face-to-face meeting. Face to face meetings should be in person; however, where this is impracticable other arrangements for synchronous meetings may be used such as video conference, Skype or telephone.

g) Both the Independent Advisor and the student should have the right to request a changed allocation, and the arrangements put in place by academic units or Affiliated Research Centres should be designed to facilitate this with maximum ease.

h) Independent Advisors should allow students to discuss issues in confidence, unless it is agreed that further action is needed or it is of a serious nature e.g. bullying and harassment.

i) Academic units (or schools) must provide students with written information about the status and purpose of any Independent Advisors records.

j) Any records on file must be agreed by both the student and the Independent Advisor and kept in a secure location.

k) Independent Advisors should be responsible for monitoring any follow-up or should involve the Associate Dean Research or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator if difficulties arise that cannot easily be resolved.

l) Associate Deans Research or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator are required to confirm on all progress reports the name of the Independent Advisor and the date on which the Independent Advisors session took place or was offered to the student.

m) Independent Advisors cannot be appointed as assessors for upgrade nor as examiners for the students for whom they act, or have acted for, in this capacity.

RD 6.4 Notwithstanding RD 6.3h a Independent Advisor who has genuine concerns regarding the health and welfare of a student or other parties should raise the issues discussed with appropriate specialists within the university or Affiliated Research Centre in confidence.

7. Registration and Re-registration

RD 7.1 Entry may be permitted for direct registration with The Open University at the following points of year: October and February. Applicants registering through the Affiliated Research Centre programme may enter at points determined by their Affiliated Research Centre within parameters approved by the university. The registration date for all students will be the first day of the month in which they registered.

RD 7.2 Students will be re-registered annually, on the anniversary date of their initial registration, provided that they maintain academic progress and ensure that all fee liabilities are met. This applies until such a time as they meet their maximum registration period (see regulation RD 7.4), or complete their studies, or withdraw from registration, whichever is the sooner.

RD 7.3 In order to study for a degree, submit a thesis for examination and be awarded the degree a candidate must be a registered research student of the university.

RD 7.4 The minimum and maximum periods of registration are as follows:

Type of Degree	**Minimum**	**Maximum**
MPhil Full-time	15 months	36 months
MPhil Part-time	30 months	72 months
PhD Full-time	24 months	48 months
PhD Part-time	48 months	96 months

Table 1: Minimum and maximum periods of registration

RD 7.5 Students who reach the maximum registration period without having submitted their thesis will be deemed to have withdrawn from the research degree programme.

RD 7.6 Research or other work undertaken before registration as a research student cannot be counted as part of the minimum period of study; with the exception of those students who transfer their registration from another university or institution any prior work cannot be included in the thesis. Preparatory work undertaken by students wanting to register through an Affiliated Research Centre must not exceed one month before a formal application is submitted to The Open University.

RD 7.7 While registered as a research student of The Open University a student may not register or study for any other degree or qualification at this university or at any other institution, unless granted permission by the Progress Board, on the recommendation of the Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre to do so as part of their research degree training.

8. Attendance, Time Commitments, Leave and Paid Work

RD 8.1 Directly registered students must be resident in the UK for the duration of their studies. Students registered through an Affiliated Research Centre must be resident in the same country as the Affiliated Research Centre through which they are registered.

RD 8.2 Full-time students are expected to be available on campus to undertake their research, attend related training or other relevant events and meet supervisors and other members of their academic unit on a regular basis.

Part-time students are expected to engage fully with the university and its research community.

RD 8.3 All students must comply with The Open University's policies and monitoring processes in relation to attendance, periods of absence, right to study and engagement with their studies.

RD 8.4 Full-time students are required to spend a minimum of 37 hours a week on their studies throughout their registration period. Part-time students are required to spend a minimum of 18.5 hours per week on their studies throughout their registration period.

RD 8.5 Full-time directly supported students are entitled, with the prior agreement of their supervisors, to take up to 40 days annual leave each year including public holidays and university closure periods. For part-time students, holiday allowances are *pro rata*. Students are not entitled to transfer holiday between years. Students who fail to take annual leave will not be entitled to payment *in lieu*. Annual leave entitlements for students registered through the Affiliated Research Centre programme are determined by the Affiliated Research Centre.

RD 8.6 Full-time students must declare any paid work they undertake to their supervisors and the Research Degrees Team, or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator if registered through an Affiliated Research Centre. Where a student, regardless of mode of study is funded they must comply with the terms and conditions of their offer letter. Any work undertaken must not lead to a failure to comply with the requirement of regulation RD 8.4 nor impact on their ability to complete the research degree. Any requests for paid work over six hours per week must be considered by the Progress Board.

RD 8.7 Following thesis submission a student may take up paid employment provided it does not interfere with their ability to complete the degree programme. Students on a visa sponsored by the Open University must continue to abide by the conditions of their visa which only permits them to work 20 hours per week.

9. Study Break

RD 9.1 A Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre may submit a request for a study break to the Progress Board for consideration. A request can be initiated by the student or if the student is indisposed the supervisor(s) or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator must submit the request. Any request should be submitted together with the supporting evidence, if this is not available then the form should be submitted, and the supporting evidence should be forwarded to the Research Degrees Team as soon as possible thereafter. Study break requests should be submitted as soon as the event that requires a study break occurs. A student is not permitted to engage in any aspect of their studies whilst on an approved study break. A study break is not an automatic right and requests for retrospective study breaks, will not be considered.

RD 9.2 Study breaks do not count towards the maximum permitted period of study (see RD 7.4).

RD 9.3 Study breaks will only be approved by the Progress Board in periods of one or more months.

RD 9.4 Full-time students may request a study break, for a maximum of 12 months in total on the following grounds:

a) Certified serious ill health of the student or a family member or dependent for whom the student is acting as a carer.

b) Internship or placement.

c) Accrued study breaks can be used as a reasonable adjustment where the student has a registered disability or long-term health condition with the university or is a registered carer. Such requests should be submitted upon accrual of one month of disrupted time.

RD 9.5 A part-time student may request a study break, for a maximum of 24 months in total on the following grounds:

a) Certified serious ill health of the student or a family member or dependent for whom the student is acting as a carer.

b) Work related difficulties.

c) Domestic commitments.

d) Internship or placement.

e) Accrued study breaks can be used as a reasonable adjustment where the student has a registered disability or long-term health condition with the university or is a registered carer. Such requests should be submitted upon accrual of one month of disrupted time.

RD 9.6 Following the submission of the thesis, students, regardless of mode of study, may only request a study break on the grounds of exceptional circumstances. Requests will to be considered by the Progress Board.

RD 9.7 Full-time and part-time students may be granted a period of maternity, paternity, adoption or shared leave up to a maximum of 12 months and this will not count toward the maximum period of study, nor the maximum permitted period for a study break. Maternity, paternity, adoption and shared leave entitlements for students registered through Affiliated Research Centres are determined by the Affiliated Research Centre, up to the maximum period permitted by the university.

RD 9.8 Upon return from a study break or maternity, paternity, adoption or shared leave the students and supervisors should have a return to study meeting.

10. Extension of Registration

RD 10.1 Students approaching their maximum registration may in only truly exceptional circumstances apply to the Progress Board for an extension to their registration of up to a maximum of 12 months in total. Requests must be submitted no later than one month prior to the maximum registration date and should be accompanied by supporting evidence and an agreed plan of work for completion. Requests submitted after the maximum registration date will not be considered as the student will have been deemed to have withdrawn from the research degree programme (RD 7.5).

RD 10.2 Students seeking an extension to their registration must commit to meeting the minimum number of study hours per week (see RD 8.4).

RD 10.3 Extensions to registration are not permitted post thesis submission.

RD 10.4 Extensions to registration are entirely independent of extensions to funding.

11. Change of Mode

RD 11.1 Students may apply to the Progress Board for a change of mode of study, from full-time to part-time or vice versa and will be considered in the context of funding source and visa status. Such requests can only be actioned once. Retrospective requests will not be considered. Where approved the minimum and maximum registration periods will be calculated pro rata.

12. Withdrawal

RD 12.1 When a student decides to terminate their registration with The Open University, the Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre must inform the Research Degrees Team using the relevant form and the Progress Board will note the decision. A decision to withdraw is absolute and cannot be reversed.

RD 12.2 Any student who fails to engage repeatedly or take extended unauthorised absence will, following issue of a written warning, be deemed to have withdrawn.

13. De-registration

RD 13.1 A student may be de-registered by the university on the following grounds:

a) Failure to engage with Academic Engagement and Attendance policy

b) Failure to make academic progress

c) Failure to complete upgrade successfully (RD 15.4 & RD 15.7) within the regulatory time frames (RD 15.2 & RD 15.5)

d) Failure to meet their fee liability

e) Failure to comply with the Code of practice for student discipline

f) Failure to comply with the Conditions of Registration for Postgraduate Research Students and these regulations which includes these regulations and the policies referred to therein.

g) Where an investigation under the PGR Plagiarism and Research Misconduct Policy establishes serious failure to comply with the Research Code of Practice

h) Following recommendation from a fitness to study panel that registration is terminated

RD 13.2 Where the academic progress of a student is unsatisfactory (RD13.1b), the Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre must invoke the Procedures for addressing failure to make satisfactory academic progress outlined in Appendix 3.

RD 13.3 Recommendations to de-register a student on the basis of RD 13.1(a, b, c & d) will be considered by the Progress Board who, having considered all of the evidence, both academic and procedural, may:

a) Approve the recommendation

b) Propose that the Faculty, or Affiliated Research Centre put together a revision plan to support the student within a limited time frame. At the end of this time period the recommendation for de-registration will be reviewed.

RD 13.4 A student who is de-registered has the right to appeal against the decision (see RD 21.1).

14. Research Integrity and Ethics

RD 14.1 All research degree studies must be conducted in line with the expectations of The Open University's Research Code of Practice.

RD 14.2 All research projects involving data from human participants and/or human tissue must be referred to The Open University's Human Research Ethics Committee for review, or for students registered through Affiliated Research Centres the equivalent body in the Affiliated Research Centre. If the Affiliated Research Centre does not have an equivalent ethics review body, the project must be referred to The Open University's Human Research Ethics Committee for review. For such research projects, a favourable opinion from The Open University's Human Research Ethics Committee, or equivalent body in the Affiliated Research Centre, must be obtained before your research project commences. Alternatively, the student must be in receipt of formal confirmation from The Open University's Human Research Ethics Committee that a full review is not required.

RD 14.3 All research projects involving animals must be referred to The Open University's Animal Welfare Ethical Review Body for review, or for students registered through Affiliated Research Centres the equivalent body in the Affiliated Research Centre. Approval from The Open University's Animal Welfare Ethical Review Body or equivalent body in the Affiliated Research Centre, and a UK Home Office License where applicable, must be obtained before research project commences.

RD 14.4 Where a student's research forms part of a much larger project, an agreement between all parties in relation to the use of data, data collection, the use of data from field work and/or placement, in the PhD thesis should be negotiated in advance, and an agreement in writing should be held by the lead supervisor and lodged on the student file held by the Graduate School.

RD 14.5 Any activity that falls short of the expectations outlined in The Open University's Research Code of Practice will be dealt with via the Postgraduate Research Student Plagiarism and Research Misconduct Policy.

15. Upgrade

RD 15.1 On admission to the MPhil/PhD programme all students, regardless of the ultimate degree aim, will be registered for the degree of Master of Philosophy (MPhil).

Master of Philosophy

RD 15.2 For those students whose aim is to obtain an MPhil, confirmation of continued registration must be completed, including any revisions, within the following time frames:

a) 7 months for a full-time student

b) 14 months for a part-time student

and will follow the same upgrade process for students intending to obtain a PhD.

Extensions to these deadlines are only permissible in truly exceptional circumstances, where recommended by the Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre and with the prior approval of the Progress Board. It is expected that students who are unable to study will apply for a study break (RD 9.1 to 9.8).

RD 15.3 The upgrade assessment is in four stages:

a) Submission by the student of a project report which includes:

i) correct and comprehensive referencing

ii) a viable research question

iii) a critical literature review which situates the proposed research into appropriate context

iv) a research proposal, including an outline and critical justification of the proposed method(s)

v) where appropriate, preliminary data/ pilot data and analysis as required by the individual's project

vi) a detailed, feasible, work plan demonstrating how the student is going to complete on time

vii) disclosure about the use of Generative AI; where such tools contributed to ideation, data analysis, or text generation that directly influenced the semantics of the research content. The disclosure should specify what type of AI was used, how it was used, and what role it played in the creation and preparation of the upgrade submission.

b) Submission by the student of a concise summary of their skills audit, and the training and development undertaken. Where appropriate this may include competence in English language. This must be signed off by the Associate Dean Research or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator.

c) An oral presentation, by the student, of their research in a public forum to the satisfaction of their Associate Dean Research or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator.

d) An upgrade viva, conducted by a minimum of two assessors assigned by the Associate Dean Research or in the case of Affiliated Research Centre students the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator. The assessors must be independent, experienced academic researchers in a cognate discipline who can make an informed judgement on the quality of the student's work to date and their potential to meet the expectations outlined in Appendix 1. The assessor(s) should not have had any influence on the design or implementation of the student's research project. They may as part of the upgrade process provide guidance on future work. Neither the student's supervisors, nor the Independent Advisor may form part of the panel, although one or more supervisors may attend the upgrade viva as observers at the request of the student. It is recommended that the upgrade viva take place face to face with all of the participants in the same location. However further to the provisions outlined in RD 19.6 a – e the viva may, at the student's or examiners' request, and providing that the supervisors have made provisions to support the student prior to and post viva, take place in a hybrid fashion (some participants online) or fully online (every participant engages online from separate locations). If reasonable adjustments are required for the upgrade viva these must be requested when the viva is being arranged, this does not preclude requests for unforeseen or exceptional circumstances which the Faculty should be notified of as soon as possible following the change of circumstances.

RD 15.4 Following the assessment the assessors shall make one of the following recommendations through the Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre to the Progress Board who on consideration of the evidence may confirm one of the following outcomes:

a) registration for the degree of Master of Philosophy (MPhil); or

b) the student should be asked to revise their upgrade report. Revisions must normally be reviewed within the time frames outlined in RD 15.2 and further registration will depend on it having been completed to the satisfaction of the assessors and Associate Dean Research or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator and confirmed by the Progress Board; or

c) the student should be de-registered due to failure to make satisfactory academic progress (RD 13.1b).

Master of Philosophy with possibility of transfer to Doctor of Philosophy

RD 15.5 Students whose aim is to obtain a Doctor of Philosophy must complete, including any revisions, the upgrade assessment within the following time frames:

a) 12 months for a full-time student;

b) 24 months for a part-time student.

Extensions to these deadlines are only permissible in truly exceptional circumstances or for pre-agreed specific funding schemes and approval will only be given where the student is making good academic progress, as recorded by the Progress Report Form. All extension to upgrade requests need to be recommended by the Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre and with the prior approval of the Progress Board. It is expected that students who are unable to study will apply to suspend their registration (RD 9.1 to RD 9.8).

RD 15.6 The upgrade assessment is in four stages:

a) Submission by the student of a project report which includes:

i) correct and comprehensive referencing

ii) a viable research question

iii) a critical literature review which situates the proposed research

iv) a research proposal, including an outline and critical justification of the proposed method(s)

v) where appropriate, preliminary data/ pilot data and analysis as required by the individual's project

vi) a detailed, feasible, work plan demonstrating how the student is going to complete on time

vii) disclosure about the use of Generative AI; where such tools contributed to ideation, data analysis, or text generation that directly influenced the semantics of the research content. The disclosure should specify what type of AI was used, how it was used, and what role it played in the creation and preparation of the upgrade submission.

b) Submission by the student of a concise summary of their skills audit, training and development undertaken. Where appropriate this may include competence in English language. This must be signed off by the Associate Dean Research or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator.

c) An oral presentation by the student of their research in a public forum to the satisfaction of their Associate Dean Research or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator.

d) An upgrade viva, conducted by a minimum of two assessors appointed by the Associate Dean Research or in the case of Affiliated Research Centre students the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator. The assessors must be independent, experienced academic researchers in a cognate discipline who can make an informed judgement on the quality of the student's work to date and their potential to meet the expectations outlined in Appendix 1. The assessor(s) should not have any influence on the design or implementation of the student's research project. They may as part of the upgrade process provide guidance on future work. Neither the student's supervisors, nor the Independent Advisor may form part of the panel, although a supervisor may attend the upgrade viva as an observer at the request of the student. It is recommended that the upgrade viva take place face to face with all of the participants in the same location. However further to the provisions outlined in RD 19.6 a – e the viva may, at the student's or examiners' request, and providing that the supervisors have made provisions to support the student prior to and post viva, take place in a hybrid fashion (some participants online) or fully online (every participant engages online from separate locations). If reasonable adjustments are required for the upgrade viva these must be requested when the viva is being arranged, this does not preclude requests for unforeseen or exceptional circumstances which the Faculty should be notified of as soon as possible following the change of circumstances.

RD 15.7 Following the assessment the assessors shall make one of the following recommendations to the Progress Board who on consideration of the evidence may confirm one of the following outcomes:

a) registration for the degree of Master of Philosophy (MPhil); or

b) registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD); or

c) the student should be asked to revise their upgrade report to complete any revisions. Revisions must normally be reviewed within the time frames outlined in RD 15.5 and further registration will depend on it having been completed to the satisfaction of the assessors and Associate Dean Research and confirmed by the Progress Board; or

d) the student should be de-registered due to failure to make satisfactory academic progress (RD 13.1b).

16. Academic Progress

RD 16.1 The university requires all registered students and their supervisors to engage in the progress monitoring process until such a time as the student's registration ceases. The following exceptions apply:

a) Students who are completing minor corrections to their thesis following examination.

b) Students who have submitted their thesis and are awaiting their *viva voce*.

RD 16.2 Students who are revising their thesis for resubmission are required to complete a progress report. Students who are completing substantial amendments to their thesis, should engage in local progress reporting as determined by the Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre.

RD 16.3 Where a student is currently on a study break, or has been on a study break during the reporting period, a progress report should be submitted which provides an update on progress made during periods of active engagement, the current situation and plans to re-engage with the research programme upon the end of the study break. Where a student is on a study break at the time the progress report is due the supervisors must provide the report on the student's behalf.

RD 16.4 Progress is formally monitored once per year. A single report should be submitted to the Research Degrees Team with oversight of progress by the Progress Board. The report should include indications as to:

a) Academic engagement and attendance

b) the extent to which a student has achieved performance targets to date;

c) academic progress;

d) research activities;

e) skills development;

and, any additional requirements specific to the degree programme. For pre-upgrade students' progress should be monitored by the Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre at 5 months for full-time students and 10 months for part-time students with the expectation that the Faculties or Affiliated Research Centres will only escalate to the Research Degrees Team, for the attention of the Progress Board if there are progress concerns at this stage.

For all post upgrade students the formal reporting form should be completed annually and sent to the Research Degrees Team one month prior to re-registration.

RD 16.5 Progress reports should be signed off by the Associate Dean Research or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator who should indicate whether:

a) the student is making satisfactory progress, or

b) there are academic concerns, or

c) the student is failing to make satisfactory progress or is failing to engage and attend satisfactorily.

Non-academic concerns should be highlighted in the report but should not be used to determine the academic recommendation

RD 16.6 Where there are academic concerns (RD 16.5b), the supervisors and student should, depending on the severity of those concerns either:

a) put an action plan in place to address the issues. A detailed report of progress against the action plan must be included in the subsequent progress monitoring form.

b) invoke the Procedures for addressing failure to make satisfactory academic progress, Appendix 3.

RD 16.7 When a student is failing to make satisfactory progress (RD16.5c), the Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre should determine whether to:

a) continue to use the Procedures for addressing failure to make satisfactory academic progress, Appendix 3.

b) Recommend de-registration of the student RD 13.1b

RD 16.8 Faculties or Affiliated Research Centres may run a more frequent progress monitoring process which may include the requirement for progress reports to be submitted at interim stages.

RD 16.9 Failure to submit a progress report as required by these regulations or by the Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre by the deadline may constitute a failure to evidence satisfactory progress. In such circumstances a student will not be permitted to re-register for the next academic year (RD 7.2).

RD 16.10 Failure of supervisors to facilitate the submission of a progress report will be deemed a line management concern and may result in mandatory training.

17. Thesis Submission

RD 17.1 Students must give three months' notice, in writing, to the Research Degrees Team or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator, of their intention to submit a thesis for the award of a research degree. Notification should include confirmation of the thesis title, a provisional date for submission, and an indication of any additional digital files to be submitted.

RD 17.2 Within the appropriate minimum and maximum periods of study for the degree (RD 7.4), students are required to submit an electronic copy of their submitted thesis together with any supporting material to the Research Degrees Team or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator. In addition, the student must provide:

a) an abstract

b) a plain language summary

c) a CRediT Taxonomy (a standardised system for describing author contributions to a research article)

d) a completed Candidate Declaration Form indicating:

i) any material that has been published

ii) material that has previously been submitted by them for a degree or other qualification to this or any other university or institution,

iii) where work is collaborative, what part of it is their independent contribution, normally presented at the start of each chapter or as a section in the introductory chapter.

iv) that the thesis count is within the regulations (RD 17.5) or, if not, that a waiver has been granted by the Progress Board

v) where work is collaborative, acknowledgement that an agreement is in place between all parties in relation to the use of data, data collection, the use of data from field work and/or placement,

vi) that the material submitted is the copy that they intend to be examined, noting that once submitted the thesis will not be returned to the student for final amendments.

vii) disclosure about the use of Generative AI; where such tools contributed to ideation, data analysis, or text generation that directly influenced the semantics of the research content. The disclosure should specify what type of AI was used, how it was used, and what role it played in the creation and preparation of the thesis submission.

The thesis must comply with regulations RD 17.3 and RD 17.4 and must conform to the standards outlined in The Open University thesis submission guidelines. Please note that Research Degrees Team are not able to accept any theses submitted after the maximum registration date.

RD 17.3 The thesis must meet the standards for the degree outlined in Appendix 1.

RD 17.4 The thesis must be written in English unless the student is in receipt of prior permission, under the terms of their letter of registration as a student of the university, to submit the work in Welsh or Gaelic. Brief quotations in foreign languages are permitted; these should not normally exceed 150 words.

RD 17.5 The length of the thesis must be appropriate to the subject area covered and must not (including footnotes, references and appendices) exceed:

a) 60,000 words for the Master of Philosophy

b) 100,000 words for the Doctor of Philosophy

c) 140,000 words for a creative writing Doctor of Philosophy.

In exceptional cases, a student may, with the support of their Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre request permission from the Progress Board to submit a thesis of greater length. Requests made prior to first submission of the thesis must be made a minimum of three months prior to submission of the thesis, at notification of submission (see RD 17.1). Agreement to submit overlength theses is also contingent on agreement by the Examiners as sought by the Progress Board Corrected theses submitted after an outcome of minor corrections and modification (RD 19.11b) or an outcome of substantial amendments (RD 19.11c) are not subject to the maximum word length. Theses being submitted for a second examination following an outcome of resubmission and re-viva following an outcome of major revision (RD 19.11d) must comply to the maximum word count.

RD 17.6 The decision to submit a thesis rests with the candidate alone. Although a candidate would normally be unwise to submit the thesis for examination against the advice of the supervisor(s), it is the candidate's right to do so. Equally, a candidate must not assume that submission with supervisory agreement guarantees a successful outcome of the examination. Further:

a) If the supervisor(s) has any comments/concerns about the candidate's intention to submit, these should be noted on the Candidate Declaration Form.

b) Where the supervisor(s) report that they do not support the thesis submission on the basis that they do not consider that it meets the required standards for examination they must write a report to the Associate Dean Research or Affiliated Research Centre Co-ordinator and to the candidate describing where the thesis falls short.

c) On receipt of the report the Associate Dean Research or Affiliated Research Centre Co-ordinator should convene a meeting of mediation between the supervisors and the candidate to seek a solution. Where a solution is not reached a report describing where the thesis falls short and the steps taken to mediate should be forwarded to the Progress Board for note.

d) Candidates who submit their thesis against supervisor(s) advice do so at their own risk and will be asked to sign a statement acknowledging:

i) That in submitting their thesis against supervisor(s) advice they do so at their own risk;

ii) That any complaints about supervision or disagreements with supervisor(s) over thesis submission do not constitute grounds for appealing against an examination decision;

iii) That there is no guarantee of a change of supervision, should the examination outcome require revisions.

RD 17.7 The volume of written material contained in a thesis that contains significant additional outputs (RD 2.7) should not exceed the maximum word lengths outlined in RD 17.5a and RD 17.5b.

RD 17.8 The written component of all theses should include, *inter alia*, strong arguments that:

a) convey the conceptual underpinning of the research in the context of the field;

b) thoroughly locate the research within the relevant literature;

c) clearly and fully explain the methodology used;

d) provide a clear explanation of how any additional outputs exemplify and develop the ideas described in the written material;

e) lead to a conclusion that, at a minimum, should summarise the key findings of the research and its relevance to the extant literature.

A detailed exposition of practices and/or technical skills in themselves is not a requirement, nor a substitute for a part or whole of an MPhil or PhD thesis.

Creative writing thesis

RD 17.9 Students may submit their own creative work forms together with the thesis, if those creative work forms are essential to the thesis, as a point of origin or reference, or as a substantial part of the intellectual enquiry. The creative work must be clearly presented in relation to the argument of the written thesis, and the creative work should be set in its relevant theoretical, historical, and critical or design context. The final submission must be accompanied by a permanent record of the creative work. Combined word lengths should adhere to the provisions contained within RD 17.5c.

18. Appointment of the Examination Panel

RD 18.1 A thesis submitted for the award of a research degree will be submitted to an examination panel approved by the Progress Board.

RD 18.2 Recommendations for the constitution of an examination panel must be made a minimum of 3 months ahead of thesis submission, in tandem with the student's intention to submit (RD 17.1) and no later than three months before the maximum registration date. Recommendations are made to the Progress Board by the Associate Dean Research or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator in consultation with the supervisors.

RD 18.3 The constitution of an examination panel must include an independent examination panel Chair and either:

a) An internal and a minimum of one external examiner

b) A minimum of two external examiners

Where a student is an employee of The Open University the panel must include a minimum of two external examiners.

RD 18.4 Those nominated for appointment as members of an examination panel should be independent and should not have had any influence on the design or implementation of the student's research project.

Any potential conflicts of interest (see Appendix 4 for a non-exhaustive list) should be declared at the point of nomination.

RD 18.5 Notwithstanding RD 18.4 the Progress Board may, on receipt of a detailed explanatory statement from the Associate Dean Research or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degree Coordinator, deem that the conflict of interest does not constitute a barrier to the integrity of the examination process. Such decisions must be fully evidenced and documented.

RD 18.6 Examination panels are appointed for the duration of the examination process, including resubmission and re-examination, unless exceptional circumstances arise.

Examination Panel Chair

RD 18.7 The appointment of an independent examination panel Chair (see Appendix 4) should be made against the following criteria:

a) Experience of UK research degree examination as an examiner and normally of research degree supervision to successful completion.

b) Currently a member of academic or research staff at The Open University or

c) Affiliated Research Centre of Lecturer or Research Associate status or above.

d) Familiarity with the research degree regulations and QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications for the award of research degrees Appendix 1.

e) Has received, or will be in receipt of, prior to the *viva voce* examination, training in the roles and responsibilities of the Chair.

f) Training must not take the form of shadowing a nominated Chair during a student's *viva voce* exam.

A Chair should not be currently registered for a research degree, other than a Higher Doctorate, at this or any other institution.

RD 18.8 Visiting professors/academics, research fellows (including post-doctoral researchers), emeritus professors and honorary associates of the university or Affiliated Research Centre may be appointed as a Chair provided that they meet the criteria set out in RD 18.7.

RD 18.9 The role of the examination panel Chair is neutral in the assessment process and should take no part in the actual assessment of the thesis including questioning the candidate during the viva or bear any influence on the time available for the examiners to conduct their examination. It is the role of the examination panel Chair:

a) to oversee, and to inform, the Research Degrees Team of the arrangements for the examination;

b) to ensure that the examiners prepare independent Pre-Viva Report Forms (RD 19.4) in a timely manner;

c) to identify with the examiners the main points to be raised at the examination;

d) to confirm with the examiners and the observer the role of the observer at the examination and in the examiners' meetings if invited to attend to answer a specific question;

e) in cases where the submitted thesis contains significant additional outputs to take account of the specific requirements and ensure that all members of the panel, the student and the observer are fully briefed as to how the examination will proceed;

f) to chair the examination and the examiners' pre- and post-examination meetings;

g) to ensure that the examination is conducted according to the university's regulations and procedures and that the examiners are able to complete their oral examination to their satisfaction;

h) to ensure that the Examination Report Form is completed diligently and agreed by all the examiners at the end of the examination. This should include a report on the examination and a recommendation on the award of the degree. If amendments are required, they should be specified in the relevant section of the Examination Report Form. Attachments can be added if necessary. Typographical errors may be annotated on an electronic copy of the thesis and submitted with the Examination Report Form. Corrections above the level of typographical errors must be explicitly stated in the Examination Report Form and if typographical corrections are deemed essential to the award of the degree, as opposed to suggested only, they must also be explicitly stated in the Examination Report Form.

i) to ensure that any amendments specified in the Examination Report Form match the criteria / examples associated with the appropriate recommended outcome in regulation RD 19.11;

j) to send by email the completed Examination Report Form, and the examiners' independent pre-viva reports to the Research Degrees Team or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator for onward transmission to the Research Degrees Team, within two working days of the *viva voce*;

k) to clarify to participants in the examination that the recommended outcome is preliminary and subject to approval by the Research Degree Examination Results Approval Committee, and to ensure that in the light of this the feedback given to the student is appropriate.

Examiners

RD 18.10 The appointment of examiners should be made against the following criteria:

a) Be qualified and have current experience and expertise in the field of the thesis to be examined.

b) Have experience of UK research degree supervision to successful completion and/or examination.

c) Collectively have experience of examining a minimum of five UK Doctoral degrees for the examination of a PhD or a minimum of five UK MPhils or Doctoral degrees for the examination of a MPhil.

An examiner should not be currently registered for a research degree, other than a Higher Doctorate, at this or any other institution.

RD 18.11 Internal examiners should be members of academic staff at The Open University or Affiliated Research Centre of Lecturer status or above. Visiting professors/academics, external supervisors who are holders of a contract with The Open University or an Affiliated Research Centre to act as an external supervisor for students other than the examinee, research fellows (including post-doctoral researchers), emeritus professors and honorary associates of the university or Affiliated Research Centre may be appointed as internal examiners provided that they meet the criteria set out in RD 18.10. Associate Lecturers who also hold an academic position and are actively engaged in research at the Open University or elsewhere, as evidenced by their CV, may be appointed as internal examiners.

RD 18.12 External examiners should normally be members of academic staff at a university or research institution, at Lecturer status or above. They should not normally be from the same department as the student's external supervisor.

RD 18.13 Former members of The Open University staff or an Affiliated Research Centre may not be appointed as an external examiner unless they left the university or Affiliated Research Centre at least three years previously.

RD 18.14 Associate Lectures, retired or emeritus staff of The Open University or an Affiliated Research Centre may not be appointed as external examiners.

RD 18.15 It is the role of the examiners to:

a) Abide by the university's contractual confidentiality statement:

i) As set out in the External Examiner Acceptance form

ii) As set out in Appendix 5.

b) Prepare an independent Pre-Viva Report Form, (RD 19.4).

c) Identify the main points to be raised at the examination.

d) Assess with the other examiner(s) whether the student has met the requirements of the relevant degree.

e) Make a recommendation with the other examiner(s) on the award of the degree and any amendments required.

f) Check corrections/amendments to the thesis following the *viva voce* examination as specified in RD 19.11.

g) Abide by the university's contractual confidentiality statement (Appendix 5).

RD 18.16 Once the panel is appointed all communication with the examiners on matters related to the thesis and or/the examination until such a time as there is a final outcome must be carried out through the panel Chair, the Research Degrees Team, the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator, the Chair of Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee or the Progress Board. The supervisors and student must only communicate via the examination panel Chair if they need to seek clarification on any matter, before or after examination.

Observers

RD 18.17 One of the student's supervisors (or other member of the school approved by the Associate Dean Research or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator) may, at the request of the student, be present at the examination in the role of observer to support the student. The request must be confirmed in writing to the Research Degrees Team.

RD 18.18 The role of the observer is to attend the *viva voce* and to:

a) Provide the candidate with a reassuring presence.

b) Provide post viva support to the student in the interpretation of the examination panel's requests for any amendments to the thesis.

c) The observer must play no part in the viva, nor interact with the student or the examiners during the viva, except where there are concerns over the welfare of the student.

RD 18.19 In addition the observer may, at the request of the examiners, provide an explanation to the examination panel at either the pre- or post-viva examination meeting on an aspect of the student's research e.g., relating to problems with access to data. The participation of an observer in these meetings should be limited to answering specific requests for information from the examiners.

RD 18.20 It is not permissible for any other additional persons to be present at the examination, subject to the provisions of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001.

19. Examination

RD 19.1 The examination of a MPhil or a PhD will have the following stages;

a) Preliminary assessment of the submitted thesis by the examiners.

b) The defence of the thesis during an oral examination.

c) The assessment and re-examination of any revisions, as appropriate.

RD 19.2 Upon receipt of the thesis and associated documentation (RD 17.2), and providing that the examination panel has been approved (RD 18.1), the Research Degrees Team or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator where the student is registered through an Affiliated Research Centre, is solely responsible for confirming receipt to the Chair and sending copies to the panel together with a copy of Part 1 of the Candidate Declaration Form.

RD 19.3 Upon receipt of the thesis, the examination panel Chair should contact the examiners, the student and the observer to make arrangements for the *viva voce*.

Independent Report Forms

RD 19.4 Each examiner is required to read the thesis and consider whether it satisfies the requirements for the degree as outlined in Appendix 1. They should each then complete and submit, in confidence and independently of all other parties, the Pre-Viva Report Form to the examination panel Chair normally a minimum of five working days before the examination. The forms should be forwarded in confidence to the Research Degrees Team, or where the student is registered through an Affiliated Research Centre, the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator, by the examination panel Chair upon receipt.

RD 19.5 Upon receipt of the Pre-Viva Report Forms from all of the examiners, the examination panel Chair may share them in confidence across the examination panel. They should not be shared with the student, their supervisors or the observer. Any breach of the confidentiality of the forms and recommendations therein may invalidate the examination.

Participation

RD 19.6 All examiners must participate in the oral examination. It is recommended that the *viva voce* examination will take place face to face with all of the participants in the same location, however further to the provisions outlined below the viva voce examination may, at the student's or examiners' request, take place in a hybrid fashion (some participants online) or fully online (every participant engages online from separate locations).

a) the student must give signed consent to being examined by a panel where the external examiner(s) is/are participating by video conference or where each participant is engaging remotely;

b) there is reliable and effective technology, in most cases this will be video conferencing facilities, at The Open University campus or the Affiliated Research Centre or other location where the participants are located, and that this is used as the means of conducting the examination remotely;

c) The Open University Faculty or the Affiliated Research Centre will accept responsibility for the technical arrangements for the *viva voce* examination;

d) contingency arrangements will be made should the technology fail on the day. The backup should be of a comparable standard (e.g. Skype or telephone conferencing). Please note however that video conference is the requisite means of conducting a *viva voce* examination with a remote participant. Where a contingency is put into place the arrangement must be discussed and agreed with the student;

e) wherever the *viva voce* takes place, the supervisory team must ensure that the student has appropriate support before and after the examination, and written evidence of this will be provided to the Examination Panel Chair.

RD 19.7 The student must attend and participate in the entire viva voce examination and failure to do so will lead to an outcome of ‘fail’ with no automatic right to a second viva voce examination. Reasonable adjustments for the viva should be requested in the ‘Notice to Submit’. This does not preclude requests for unforeseen or exceptional circumstances which the Graduate School should be notified of as soon as possible following the change of circumstances. If reasonable adjustments are required for the viva these must be requested a minimum of two weeks prior to the viva date.

Viva voce examination

RD 19.8 The examination panel should meet prior to the examination to:

a) Consider the preliminary reports and the thesis.

b) Confirm the structure of the questioning and the main points to be raised at the examination.

c) Identify any issues that require additional information from the observer.

The observer should not be present at this meeting unless RD 19.8c applies.

RD 19.9 The examination should cover all aspects of the thesis and confirm that the thesis is the student’s own original work.

RD 19.10 Following the examination the examination panel should meet in the absence of the student to discuss the recommended outcome and complete the Examination Report Form. The observer may only be present at the request of the examination panel.

Outcomes

RD 19.11 The following recommendations are available to the examination panel:

a) The student be awarded the degree.

b) The student be awarded the degree subject to minor corrections and modifications to the thesis.

c) The student be awarded the degree subject to substantial amendments to the thesis.

d) The student be permitted to resubmit their thesis for re-examination and re-viva following major revision.

e) In the case of a PhD examination, the student be awarded the degree of MPhil subject to the presentation of the thesis amended to the satisfaction of the examiners and which must meet the expectations for the award as set out in Appendix 1.

f) In the case of a PhD examination, the student be permitted to resubmit their thesis for re-examination and re-viva for a MPhil award following major revision.

g) The student be not awarded the degree and not be permitted to be re-examined.

Where the panel cannot provide a unanimous recommendation, please invoke regulations RD 19.28 to RD 19.29. The outcome should be based solely on the quality of the submission and examination. It should not be influenced by any information that would affect the student's ability to complete the corrections within the permitted time frames. Any information provided that would support the need for a longer time frame for completing corrections can be put forward to Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee for their consideration.

Consideration of the outcome following the viva voce

RD 19.12 Within two working days of the *viva voce* examination, the examination panel Chair must submit the completed Examination Report Form and the Pre-Viva Report Forms to the Research Degrees Team or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator for onward transmission to the Research Degrees Team.
These will be forwarded to the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee for consideration as outlined in Appendix 6.

RD 19.13 Normally within 5 working days of receipt of the Examination Report Form and the Pre-Viva Report Forms the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee may:

a) Ratify the recommendation of the examination panel. Where the Committee approves a recommendation that the student be awarded the degree, the Committee will formally approve the award at this stage.

b) Request further clarification from the examination panel regarding the recommended outcome.

c) Approve an alternative outcome – when in exceptional circumstances and following consultation with the examination panel, where there continues to be a demonstrable inconsistency between the recommendation of the exam panel and other approved examination results.

RD 19.14 Upon receipt of the decision from the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee, the Research Degrees Team will send the examination outcome letter together with a copy of the Examination Report Form to the student, the supervisors and the Associate Dean Research or for those students registered through Affiliated Research Centres, the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator, for onward transmission to the student and other relevant stakeholders.

Corrections, modifications and amendments

RD 19.15 Where the examiners are satisfied that the student has reached the standard required for the degree but consider that the candidate's thesis requires additional explanatory information or some amendments and corrections, they may recommend that the degree be awarded subject to the candidate amending the thesis (RD 19.11b or c). In such circumstances the following will apply:

Where the original outcome is 'minor corrections and modifications':

a) Where the outcome awarded is 'subject to minor corrections and modifications' (RD 19.11b) the student must complete and submit the corrected thesis and a document that explains how they have met the requirements to the Research Degrees Team or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator, for onward transmission to the nominated examiner, within three months of the date of the examination outcome letter.

b) The corrections and modifications must be made to the satisfaction of at least one examiner as agreed by the examiners following the *viva voce*. Examiners may not make additional requirements at this stage.

c) Upon receipt of the corrected thesis, the nominated examiner will, within one month of receipt, independently complete the Corrected Thesis Form and return it to the Research Degrees Team, or to the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator for onward transmission to the Research Degrees Team, making one of the following recommendations:

   i) the student has completed the corrections and modifications, has met the academic requirements and should be awarded the degree for which they were examined

   ii) for a PhD examination the student has failed to make the corrections and modifications and should be awarded a MPhil (subject to the provisions within RD 19.11e)

iii) the student should be not awarded the degree and should not be permitted to be re-examined.

d) Where the recommendation is that the student be awarded the degree for which they were examined (RD 19.15ci) the Corrected Thesis Form will be forwarded to the Chair of the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee who may approve the award.

e) Where the recommendation is that the student has not completed the corrections and modifications to the required standards (RD 19.12cii or iii), the corrected thesis must be considered by the other examiner(s) on the panel who will independently complete a copy of the Corrected Thesis Form. All of the Corrected Thesis Forms will then be forwarded to the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee for consideration as follows:

i) Where the examiners are not in agreement the regulations for non-unanimous decisions will be invoked (RD 19.28 to RD 19.29).

ii) Where the examiners are in agreement the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee may:

1) Ratify the recommendation of the examination panel. Where the Committee approves a recommendation that the student be awarded the degree, the Committee will formally approve the award at this stage.

2) Request further clarification from the examination panel regarding the recommended outcome.

3) Approve an alternative outcome – when in exceptional circumstances and following consultation with the examination panel where there continues to be a demonstrable inconsistency between the recommendation and other approved examination results.

Where the original outcome is ‘substantial amendments’:

a) Where the outcome of the original exam is ‘subject to substantial amendments’ (RD 19.11c), the student must complete and submit the corrected thesis and an explanatory document demonstrating how they have met the requirements to the Research Degrees Team, or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator, for onward transmission to the examiners, within six months of the date of the examination outcome letter.

b) The amendments must be made to the satisfaction of all of the examiners. Examiners may not impose additional requirements at this stage.

c) Upon receipt of the corrected thesis, the examiners will, within one month of receipt, independently complete the Corrected Thesis Form and return it to the Research Degrees Team recommending one of the following options:

    i) The student has completed the amendments, has met the academic requirements and should be awarded the degree for which they were examined.

    ii) The student has not satisfactorily completed the amendments, or has introduced additional material that requires amendment, and should be permitted a further three months to make minor corrections and modifications. In such cases regulations RD 19.15a to RD 19.15e will apply because the new outcome is recommended ‘Minor corrections and modifications’.

    iii) For a PhD examination the student has failed to make the amendments and should be awarded a MPhil (subject to the provisions within RD 19.11e).

    iv) The student should be not awarded the degree and should not be permitted to be re-examined.

d) Where the recommendation is that the student be awarded the degree for which they were examined (RD 19.15hi) the Corrected Thesis Forms will be forwarded to the Chair of the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee who may approve the award.

e) Where the recommendation is that the student has not completed the corrections and amendments to the required standards (RD 19.15hii or iii), the Corrected Thesis Forms will be forwarded to the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee for consideration as follows:

   i) Where the examiners are not in agreement the regulations for non-unanimous decisions will be invoked (RD 19.28 to RD 19.29).

   ii) Where the examiners are in agreement the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee may:

      1) Ratify the recommendation of the examination panel. Where the Committee approves a recommendation that the student be awarded the degree, the Committee will formally approve the award at this stage.

      2) Request further clarification from the examination panel regarding the recommended outcome.

      3) Approve an alternative outcome – when in exceptional circumstances and following consultation with the examination panel where there continues to be a demonstrable inconsistency between the recommendation and other approved examination results.

Where the original outcome was ‘resubmission and re-examination’:

RD 19.16 Where the examiners are not satisfied that the student has reached the standard required for the degree, they may recommend that the thesis is revised and resubmitted for re-examination. The student must resubmit the revised thesis to the Research Degrees Team or to the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator in the case of a student registered through an Affiliated Research Centre, within 12 months of the date of the examination outcome letter.

RD 19.17 The revised thesis should be sent to the same examiners who participated in the original *viva voce*. In exceptional cases where an examiner is no longer available a new examiner will be appointed by the Progress Board in line with regulations RD 18.1 to RD 18.6 and RD 18.10 to RD 18.16.

RD 19.18 The re-examination will follow the process set out in regulations RD 19.1 to RD 19.10.

RD 19.19 The examiners are required to make a judgement as to whether the candidate has, following revision and re-examination as specified by the examiners on the basis of the previous examination, met the criteria for the relevant degree.

RD 19.20 The following recommendations are available to the examination panel upon re-examination:

a) The student be awarded the degree.

b) The student be awarded the degree subject to minor corrections and modifications to the thesis (RD 19.15a to e).

c) The student be awarded the degree subject to substantial amendments to the thesis (RD 19.15f to j).

d) In the case of a PhD examination, the student be awarded the degree of MPhil subject to the presentation of the thesis amended to the satisfaction of the examiners and which must meet the expectations for the award as set out in Appendix 1.

e) The student should be not awarded the degree and should not be permitted to be re-examined.

No further re-examination will be permitted.

Consideration of the outcome following the re-examination after resubmission:

RD 19.21 Within two working days of the re-examination, the examination panel Chair will provide the Research Degrees Team, or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator for onward transmission to the Research Degrees Team, with the completed Examination Report Form and the *Pre-Viva Report Forms.* These will be forwarded together with copies of the Examination Report Form and the Pre-Viva Report Forms from the original *viva voce* to the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee for consideration.

RD 19.22 Upon receipt of the Examination Report Form and the Pre-Viva Report Forms the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee may:

a) Ratify the recommendation of the examination panel. Where the Committee approves a recommendation that the student be awarded the degree, the Committee will formally approve the award at this stage.

b) Request further clarification from the examination panel regarding the recommended outcome.

c) Approve an alternative outcome – When in exceptional circumstances and following consultation with the examination panel where there continues to be a demonstrable inconsistency between the recommendation and other approved examination results.

RD 19.23 Upon receipt of the decision from the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee, the Research Degrees Team will send the examination outcome letter together with a copy of the Examination Report Form to the student, the supervisors and the Associate Dean Research, or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator for onward transmission to the student and other relevant stakeholders, in the case of students registered through Affiliated Research Centres.

Where the student is awarded an MPhil following a PhD examination:

RD 19.24 Where the examiners are not satisfied that the student has reached the standard required for the degree for a Doctoral degree they may, either at the original *viva voce* or following re-examination, recommend that the student be awarded the degree of MPhil (RD 19.11e or RD 19.20d).

RD 19.25 Where this recommendation is made following the original *viva voce* examination it may be an outright award or may involve minor corrections and amendments (in which case regulation RD 19.15a to e applies), substantial amendments (in which case regulation RD 19.15f to j applies) or resubmission and re-examination for a MPhil degree (in which case regulations RD 19.16 to RD 19.20 apply).

RD 19.26 Where this recommendation is made following resubmission and re-examination it may be an outright award or may involve minor corrections and modifications (in which case regulation RD 19.15a to e applies) or substantial amendments (in which case regulation RD 19.15f to j applies). The option of resubmission and re-examination is not available at this stage.

Where there is no award and the student is not permitted to be re-examined:

RD 19.27 Where the examiners are not satisfied that the student has reached the standard required for the award of a Doctoral degree and recommend that the student be not awarded the degree and not be permitted to be re-examined the Examination Report Form must include details of:

a) Why the candidate failed to meet the requirements of the relevant degree.

b) Why the examination panel is unable to recommend major revision and resubmission of the thesis.

c) Why, in the case of a PhD examination, a MPhil cannot be recommended.

Where the Examiners are not in agreement – there is a non-unanimous decision:

RD 19.28 Where the recommendations are not unanimous immediately following the viva the Chair of the examination panel will seek a resolution during the post viva meeting. Where this is not possible or following a non-unanimous decision following the submission of a revised thesis, the Chair of the examination panel will schedule a new meeting of the examiners to seek a resolution. If after the meeting the recommendations are still not unanimous, the Chair of the examination panel shall arrange a meeting of the examiners to seek a resolution. If this is not possible the Chair shall submit their report of the meeting(s), together with the examiners' separate reports and recommendations to the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee who may:

a) Accept a majority decision.

b) Accept the decision of the external examiner(s).

c) Request the Progress Board to appoint an additional external examiner.

RD 19.29 Where an additional external examiner is appointed, they shall not be informed of the recommendations of the other examiners. On receipt of the report from the additional external examiner the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee will reconsider the outcome and normally accept a majority decision.

Where the student fails to meet the deadlines for submission of amendments and/or revisions:

RD 19.30 Where following a *viva voce* examination, the student is unable to work, they may apply for a study break (RD 9.6).

RD 19.31 In the absence of an approved study break students are expected to meet the deadline for the submission of their revised thesis. The Research Degrees Team is not authorised to accept any thesis submitted after the deadline. In such circumstances the matter will be referred Progress Board together with any evidence of mitigating circumstances which led to the failure to meet the deadline. The Progress Board may or may not accept the late submission.

20. Post Award Requirements

RD 20.1 Following confirmation that the academic requirements for the award of the degree have been met students are required to submit a copy of their thesis and any associated documentation/materials to the university Library in accordance with the guidance within The Open University thesis submission guidelines. Students are expected to complete this within one week of the award letter. A degree certificate will only be issued upon completion of this requirement.

Embargo or restricted access to a thesis

RD 20.2 The Open University has an open access policy on research outputs. It is therefore an expectation that a research degree thesis is made publicly available online through Open Research Online. Students are encouraged to make any research data publicly available online through the Open Research Data Online repository.

RD 20.3 Requests for embargo of a thesis should usually be made, and approved, at the point of application. Where it is necessary to apply for confidentiality of the thesis after registration, the application should be made to the Research Degrees Team for joint consideration by the Progress board, but it is not guaranteed that an application for an embargo will be approved. No retrospective requests will be approved once the student's thesis is available on Open Research Online.

RD 20.4 An application for confidentiality will normally only be approved in order to enable a patent application to be lodged or to protect commercially, nationally classified or politically sensitive material. A thesis shall not be restricted in this way in order to protect research leads. In consideration for theses containing a substantial amount of commercially publishable creative writing or artistic material, the student can redact sections of the thesis before making it freely available online but only if an intact and complete version of the thesis is still held by the university Library.

RD 20.5 Where an embargo is warranted and justified the normal maximum period of confidentiality is two years, in exceptional circumstances the Progress Board may approve a longer period.

21. Appeals and Complaints

RD 21.1 A student may make a request for the academic body charged with making decisions on admission, assessment, student progression or award to review a decision. Students may make such an appeal against a decision providing that they meet the criteria outlined in the university's appeals process.

RD 21.2 A student may express their dissatisfaction concerning the provision of a programme of study or related academic or administrative service, which is not an appeal against a decision. Students may make such a complaint using the university's complaints process, or in the case of an Affiliated Research Centre student, the university's complaints process once the Affiliated Research Centre's complaints process has been exhausted.

RD 21.3 A student must not take their appeal or complaint outside of the university until all internal processes have been exhausted and have been deemed unable to resolve the complaint or appeal.

Research degree qualification regulations specifically for Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy by distance learning

1. Degree Name and Standards

RDD 1.1 The Open University shall award the degrees of Master of Philosophy (referred to as MPhil) and Doctor of Philosophy (referred to as PhD) to registered candidates (including those registered through Affiliated Research Centres) upon successful completion of approved programmes of advanced supervised research. Holders of these qualifications are permitted, following award, to use the letters MPhil or PhD as appropriate after their names.

RDD 1.2 A Master of Philosophy degree may be awarded to a candidate who has demonstrated, through the presentation and defence of a thesis, to the satisfaction of the examiners, that the expectations outlined in Appendix 1, 1.1 have been met.

RDD 1.3 A Doctor of Philosophy degree may be awarded to a candidate who has demonstrated, through the presentation and defence of a thesis, to the satisfaction of the examiners that the expectations outlined in Appendix 1, 1.2 have been met.

2. Requirements for Application

RDD 2.1 An applicant seeking admission to the degree of MPhil or MPhil with the possibility of transfer to PhD should hold the minimum of an upper second-class honours degree, or a Master's degree in an appropriate cognate area from a UK university or other recognised degree-awarding body. The comparability of qualifications from outside the UK with The Open University requirements will be determined through reference to UK ENIC.

RDD 2.2 Applicants holding qualifications other than those in RDD 2.1 must demonstrate suitability for postgraduate level research based on professional experience, publications, written reports or other appropriate evidence of previous research related to the proposed PhD application shall be taken into consideration. In addition, applicants must provide the names of qualified persons from whom the university may seek references as to the applicants' academic attainment and potential for undertaking research at this level. Applicants who do not hold any degree level qualifications will not be admitted and will not be eligible for consideration.

RDD 2.3 Applicants may apply for admission on either a full-time or a part-time basis, dependent upon the requirements of any funding body.

RDD 2.4 Where English is not the applicant's first language, the applicant must demonstrate sufficient proficiency in the English language to support successful study at research degree standard. It is usual to require IELTS scores that meet the minimum requirements of 6.5 overall score, and no less than 6.0 in any of the four elements (reading, writing, listening and speaking), or equivalent. Certificates must be no older than 2 years at the point of registration. Exceptions may be approved by the Progress Board upon the provision of equivalent evidence by the Faculty or the Affiliated Research Centre.

RDD 2.5 Applicants for research degrees in a particular discipline may be required to fulfil additional entry requirements. These may include discipline specific knowledge, a higher minimum English language requirement, a professional qualification and/or equivalent experience. Discipline specific requirements are published in the Research Degrees Prospectus. Affiliated Research Centre specific requirements are published in each Affiliated Research Centre's recruitment documentation.

RDD 2.6 The university can only accept applications for study in an approved field of research for which arrangements have been made in respect of either subject and/or methodological specific supervision and where agreements are in place for applicants to have access to appropriate research facilities. Projects must be well-defined and must be completable within the regulatory timeframes (RDD 7.4). The approved fields of research are revised annually and can be found in the Research Degrees Prospectus. The approved fields of research for applicants registering through the Affiliated Research Centre programme will be determined by their Affiliated Research Centre.

RDD 2.7 The university may accept applications for a programme of study from which the outputs will include significant material that would not be traditionally incorporated into a "book", for example audio or video files, datasets, large visual files such as drawings or, maps, code, software or digital renditions of physical artifacts (together "non-text outputs"). The outputs must be submitted as digital files for examination and digital archiving and should normally be submitted as common file formats. The requirements for the thesis in terms of argument, analysis, deployment of evidence and referencing are the same as for a thesis that does not contain these additional non-text outputs (see RDD 16.7 to RDD 16.9). The balance of evidence and argument in the research proposal shall reflect the anticipated balance between the written and non-text outputs that together contribute the final submission portfolio with approval of the Progress Board.

RDD 2.8 Applicants must assign their intellectual property rights arising from research undertaken that contributes to the research degree to The Open University unless they are bound by an intellectual property agreement with a third party. Any such agreements must be brought to the attention of the university and approved at the point of application.

RDD 2.9 Applicants must be able to demonstrate that they have the infrastructure in place to support their research whilst working at a distance.

3. Admission

RDD 3.1 Faculties and Affiliated Research Centres are responsible for managing the recruitment and fair selection of research students in accordance with the QAA Quality Code, the Equality Act 2010, and the Recruitment Guidelines and where applicable the equality legislation in the Affiliated Research Centre's country of location.

RDD 3.2 A selection panel Chair is responsible for ensuring procedural integrity of the whole recruitment and selection process. They are also responsible for ensuring that panel members and all staff involved in the recommendations for admission have undertaken the required training including unconscious bias and fair selection. A selection panel will include a minimum of two members, one of whom provides continuity of recruitment within the discipline, and one who is a potential member of the supervisory team or who provides subject expertise.

RDD 3.3 All applicants must supply the following evidence in support of their application:

a) a completed application form

b) copies of their degree certificates

c) a copy of their research proposal, or a statement confirming suitability for registration, or a project description as requested by the Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre, noting that in some areas of the university applications are made to specific advertised projects.

d) a copy of their passport, or other form of identification. Accepted documents include (Proof of Identity checklist):

- Original birth certificate (UK birth certificate issued within 12 months of the date of birth in full form including those issued by UK authorities overseas such as Embassies High Commissions and HM Forces)
- EEA member state identity card
- Current UK or EEA photo card driving licence
- Full old-style driving licence
- Photographic registration cards for self-employed individuals in the construction industry -CIS4
- Benefit book or original notification letter from Benefits Agency, Firearms or shotgun certificate
- Residence permit issued by the Home Office to EEA nationals on sight of own country passport
- National identity card bearing a photograph of the applicant.

e) the names and contact details of two independent referees

f) equal opportunities and Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) monitoring form.

In respect of Affiliated Research Centre students items b) d) e) must be checked and verified by the Affiliated Research Centre.

In addition, and where applicable the following documentation must also be submitted:

a) transcripts of academic qualifications

b) certified translations of degree certificates and transcripts

c) copies of English language qualification certificates

d) list of publications or evidence of research experience

e) documentation supporting a change of name.

RDD 3.4 No applicant may be admitted without prior interview and the receipt by the university of the references.

RDD 3.5 To be admitted as a research student of the university an applicant must:

a) comply with regulations RDD 2.1 to RDD 2.8 as appropriate

b) register in accordance with the instructions contained within their offer letter

c) agree to comply with the Conditions of Registration for Postgraduate Research Students, the Research Code of Practice, the Research Degrees Regulations and all policies relevant to the student journey, and or any updates to these throughout the period of registration

d) agree to comply with the registration requirements and attend induction in person

e) pay or agree to pay the appropriate fees and charges

f) if a visa is required it must be appropriate and valid as per UKVI requirements.

RDD 3.6 In addition to the above for applicants seeking direct registration with The Open University regulations RDD 3.7 to RDD 3.9 apply; for applicants seeking registration with The Open University through an Affiliated Research Centre regulations RD 3.10 to RD 3.12 apply.

Direct registration

RDD 3.7 Formal applications must be submitted to the relevant Faculty office. This does not preclude any preliminary discussion between an applicant and academic members of the Faculty. Having followed the recruitment process the faculty may make a recommendation for admission to the

Progress Board. The faculty may inform applicants that they have made such a recommendation, but they cannot make any offers of registration, formal or informal, at this stage.

RDD 3.8 Prior to applications being considered by the Progress Board they will be screened by the Research Degrees Team to ensure that applicants have met the entrance requirements and, for international students, satisfy the requirements of UK Visa and Immigration.

RDD 3.9 Approval for admission is granted by the Progress Board. In addition to the regulatory requirements any other terms and conditions will be provided in the offer letter.

Registration through an Affiliated Research Centre

RDD 3.10 Formal applications must be made to the Affiliated Research Centre. This does not preclude any preliminary discussion between an applicant and academic members of the Affiliated Research Centre. If approved by the Affiliated Research Centre, the application for registration will then be forwarded to the Research Degrees Team for consideration by the Progress Board. Having followed the recruitment process the Affiliated Research Centre may inform applicants that they have made such a recommendation, but they cannot make any offers of registration, formal or informal, at this stage.

RDD 3.11 Prior to applications being considered by the Progress Board they will be screened by the Research Degrees Team to ensure that applicants have met the entrance requirements and, for relevant international students, satisfy the requirements of UK Visa and Immigration.

RDD 3.12 Approval for admission is granted by the Progress Board following a recommendation by ARC Management Group. In addition to the regulatory requirements any other terms and conditions of registration with the university will be provided in the offer letter.

4. Supervision

RDD 4.1 Upon admission students will be allocated a supervisory team. The team will be nominated by the Associate Dean Research in consultation with relevant stakeholders, or in the case of students registered through the Affiliated Research Centres the Research Degrees Coordinator. The Progress Board considers and approves the appointment of supervisors upon admission and when any further changes are required. Students are not permitted to select their own supervisory team.

RDD 4.2 Supervisory teams comprise a minimum of two internal supervisors who are members of the university's academic staff, or a member of academic staff from a Doctoral Training Partner. Additional external supervisors may be appointed where appropriate. The constitution of supervisory teams for students registered through an Affiliated Research Centre must comprise a minimum of two supervisors, at least one internal to the Affiliated Research Centre.

RDD 4.3 Where the supervisory team includes an external supervisor it is the responsibility of the internal supervisor(s) to:

a) Ensure that the external supervisor is carrying out their responsibilities to the student and to the university, this includes contributing to progress monitoring reports and ensuring that they are submitted at the required time.

b) Meet the student with the external supervisor to discuss the research project for part-time students at least once a year or at least three times in the case of full-time students.

RDD 4.4 External supervisors must abide by the university's contractual confidentiality statement (Appendix 5) and with any terms and conditions associated with any funding arrangements.

RDD 4.5 Supervisors must meet all of the following criteria:

a) Hold an appointment as a member of academic staff, or a research fellow, at The Open University, or an Affiliated Research Centre, and be actively researching. For external supervisors at another university, they must hold an appointment as a member of academic staff and be actively researching as a member of a research group of appropriate academic standing.

b) Possess current academic expertise in the chosen discipline. Current expertise will be evidenced by their CV.

c) Hold a doctorate. The expectation is that supervisors will have a research degree (usually a PhD or Professional Doctorate) or for some disciplines, supervisors may have demonstrated significant engagement within their research or practice field in the absence of a research degree, as evidenced by their CV. Such variances require approval in advance by the Progress Board.

d) Have sufficient time to carry out their responsibilities in the provision of quality supervision and support for students.

e) Are willing to commit to providing supervision for the duration of the student's studies.

f) Have read and confirmed their understanding of these regulations and of any updates.

The supervisory team collectively must have experience of supervising at least one UK PhD from the point of registration to successful completion and at least one member of the team must be an active researcher involved in research within their chosen discipline as evidenced through peer reviewed outputs.

RDD 4.6 One of the supervisors internal to the university or the Affiliated Research Centre will be the lead supervisor and will take day to day responsibility for the administrative issues and processes required for student registration, progression, submission and completion within the time frames outlined within these regulations. Where the lead supervisor does not have experience of supervising a UK PhD student to successful completion (RDD 4.5) the supervisor on the team with the requisite UK PhD experience must act as a mentor to the lead supervisor. Regardless of experience or role it is the responsibility of all supervisors to ensure to the best of their ability that they work with the student to ensure that all elements of a student's registration, including submission and completion are understood and undertaken within the regulatory timescales.

RDD 4.7 Supervisors should not be registered for a research degree themselves other than a Higher Doctorate, nor should they be in a close personal relationship with the student they are supervising. Supervisors should not normally be in a close personal relationship with any other member of the supervision team, nor should there be any other significant conflict of interest (see Appendix 4 or a non-exhaustive list). Where a potential conflict of interest exists or develops during the course of the student's research degree registration, the supervisor(s) must declare this, for consideration by the Progress Board.

RDD 4.8 Research fellows (including post-doctoral researchers), emeritus professors and honorary associates of the Open University may be appointed as internal supervisors (not as external supervisors), provided that they and the other members of the supervisory team meet the requirements of RDD 4.5. Associate Lecturers may be appointed as supervisors on a separate contract provided that they have a substantive academic position or are contracted to undertake research at the Open University or another organisation. Visiting academics may be appointed as external supervisors on a separate contract. Those appointed as supervisors for Affiliated Research Centre students must have a contract for supervision with the Affiliated Research Centre. With the exception of academic staff who can through their associate status demonstrate that they are contributing to research activities in the university or Affiliated Research Centre, retired members of staff are not eligible to join supervisory teams at the start of a new studentship, but may continue to supervise to completion any students registered at the time of retirement providing the supervisory team as a whole is regulatory.

RDD 4.9 Students are expected to have regular formal scheduled meetings with their supervisors. These formal meetings should result in an agreed set of supervisory notes that record the discussion. Meetings should be held with the following frequency:

a) Full-time students should have a formal meeting with their supervisor(s) a minimum of ten times per year.

b) Part-time students should have a formal meeting with their supervisor(s) a minimum of five times per year.

Informal meetings, without the obligations for an agreed set of notes, can be held as required. Regardless, supervisors should keep sufficient notes to provide an accurate record of the student's journey. Meeting notes should be stored on the agreed management system.

RDD 4.10 Where a supervisor is absent for a period of three months or more alternative supervisory arrangements must be put in place and approved by the Progress Board.

Upon the return of a supervisor following such a period of extended leave, discussions must take place with the Associate Dean Research or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator, as appropriate, regarding the viability of them resuming the role.

All changes to any supervisory team must be approved by the Progress Board. Whilst students may request a change to their supervisory team, this is not guaranteed and appointment of new supervisors cannot be initiated by the student.

RDD 4.11 Faculties and Affiliated Research Centres are responsible for allocating sufficient time for supervisors to carry out the duties required for quality supervision and support of students.

RDD 4.12 Supervisors are required to undertake initial training within the first 12 months of beginning the role within the university or within the Affiliated Research Centre, and then after every four years. This includes experienced supervisors who are new to the university or Affiliated Research Centre as well as supervisors who are new to the role. All supervisors are required to meet the expectations of the Research Degrees Committee with regard to their continued professional development as outlined in Appendix 2.

RDD 4.13 Students and supervisors are expected to abide by the Code of practice for supervisors and research students see Appendix 2 and the Supervisor Policy.

5. Independent Advisors

RDD 5.1 Within one month of registration students will be formally notified by their academic unit or discipline as to the name and contact details of their Independent Advisor.

RDD 5.2 The Independent Advisor is appointed by the Associate Dean Research, or for those students registered through an Affiliated Research Centre, the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator.

RDD 5.3 The requirements for Independent Advisors are as follows:

a) Independent Advisors must be members of academic staff and have some research degree supervision experience.

b) Independent Advisors should not be senior officers of The Open University or the Affiliated Research Centre with responsibility for the research degree programme.

c) Independent Advisors must act in the best interests of the student, irrespective of any professional or social relationship with either the student or the supervisors.

d) Independent Advisors must be offered to all new students by the fifth month of their registration and then annually in the first quarter of the calendar year (January - March).

e) Independent Advisors should be available for consultation by the student throughout the year.

f) Both the Independent Advisor and the student should have the right to request a changed allocation, and the arrangements put in place by academic units or Affiliated Research Centres should be designed to facilitate this with maximum ease.

g) Independent Advisors should allow students to discuss issues in confidence, unless it is agreed that further action is needed or it is of a serious nature e.g. bullying and harassment.

h) Academic units (or schools) must provide students with written information about the status and purpose of any Independent Advisors records.

i) Any records on file must be agreed by both the student and the Independent Advisor and kept in a secure location.

j) Independent Advisors should be responsible for monitoring any follow-up or should involve the Associate Dean Research or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator if difficulties arise that cannot easily be resolved.

k) Associate Deans Research or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator are required to confirm on all progress reports the name of the Independent Advisor and the date on which the Independent Advisors session took place or was offered to the student.

l) Independent Advisors cannot be appointed as assessors for upgrade nor as examiners for the students for whom they act, or have acted for, in this capacity.

RDD 5.4 Notwithstanding RDD 5.3g a Independent Advisor who has genuine concerns regarding the health and welfare of a student or other parties should raise the issues discussed with appropriate specialists within the university or Affiliated Research in confidence.

6. Registration and Re-registration

RDD 6.1 Entry may be permitted for direct registration with The Open University at the following points of year: October and February. Applicants registering through the Affiliated Research Centre programme may enter at points determined by their Affiliated Research Centre within parameters approved by the university. The registration date for all students will be the first day of the month in which they registered.

RDD 6.2 Students will be re-registered annually, on the anniversary date of their initial registration, provided that they maintain academic progress and ensure that all fee liabilities are met. This applies until such a time as they meet their maximum registration period (see regulation RDD 6.4), or complete their studies, or withdraw from registration, whichever is the sooner.

RDD 6.3 In order to study for a degree, submit a thesis for examination and be awarded the degree a candidate must be a registered research student of the university.

RDD 6.4 The minimum and maximum periods of registration are as follows:

Type of Degree	**Minimum**	**Maximum**
MPhil Full-time	15 months	36 months
MPhil Part-time	30 months	72 months
PhD Full-time	24 months	48 months
PhD Part-time	48 months	96 months

Table 1: Minimum and maximum periods of registration

RDD 6.5 Students who reach the maximum registration period without having submitted their thesis will be deemed to have withdrawn from the research degree programme.

RDD 6.6 Research or other work undertaken before registration as a research student cannot be counted as part of the minimum period of study; with the exception of those students who transfer their registration from another university or institution any prior work cannot be included in the thesis. Preparatory work undertaken by students wanting to register through an Affiliated Research Centre must not exceed one month before a formal application is submitted to The Open University.

RDD 6.7 While registered as a research student of The Open University a student may not register or study for any other degree or qualification at this university or at any other institution, unless granted permission by the Progress Board, on the recommendation of the Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre to do so as part of their research degree training.

7. Attendance, Time Commitments, Leave and Paid Work

RDD 7.1 Registered students may reside anywhere in the world. Students who are resident in the UK must be available to attend any required courses in the UK and must attend The Open University campus or Affiliated Research Centre to undertake registration and induction. Where a student's health or other exceptional circumstances prevents attendance Progress Board may, having received prior notice, waive this requirement. Where a student is unable to attend a required course, alternative methods of provision must be established.

RDD 7.2 Full-time students are expected to be available to undertake their research, attend related training or other relevant events and meet supervisors and other members of their academic unit on a regular basis.

All students are expected to engage fully with the university and its research community.

RDD 7.3 All students must comply with The Open University's policies and monitoring processes in relation to engagement, periods of absence and right to study.

RDD 7.4 Full-time students are required to spend a minimum of 37 hours a week on their studies throughout their registration period. Part-time students are required to spend a minimum of 18.5 hours per week on their studies throughout their registration period.

RDD 7.5 Full-time directly supported students are entitled, with the prior agreement of their supervisors, to take up to 40 days annual leave each year including public holidays and university closure periods. For part-time students, holiday allowances are *pro rata*. Students are not entitled to transfer holiday between years. Students who fail to take annual leave will not be entitled to payment *in lieu*. Annual leave entitlements for students registered through the Affiliated Research Centre programme are determined by the Affiliated Research Centre.

RDD 7.6 Full-time students must declare any paid work they undertake to their supervisors and the Research Degrees Team or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator if registered through an Affiliated Research Centre. Where a student, regardless of mode of study is funded they must comply with the terms and conditions of their offer letter.

Any work undertaken must not lead to a failure to comply with the requirement of regulation RDD 6.4 nor impact on their ability to complete the research degree. Any requests for paid work over six hours per week must be considered by the Progress Board.

RDD 7.7 Following thesis submission a student may take up paid employment provided it does not interfere with their ability to complete the degree programme.

8. Study Break

RDD 8.1 A Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre may submit a request for a study break to the Progress Board for consideration. A request can be initiated by the student or if the student is indisposed the supervisor(s) or Affiliated Research Centre must submit the request. Any request should be submitted together with the supporting evidence, if this is not available then the form should be submitted, and the supporting evidence should be forwarded to the Research Degrees Team as soon as possible thereafter. Study break requests should be submitted as soon as the event that requires a study break occurs. A student is not permitted to engage in any aspect of their studies whilst on an approved study break. A study break is not an automatic right and requests for retrospective study breaks, will not be considered.

RDD 8.2 Study breaks do not count towards the maximum permitted period of study (see RDD 6.4).

RDD 8.3 Study breaks will only be approved by the Progress Board in periods of one or more months.

RDD 8.4 Full-time students may request a study break, for a maximum of 12 months in total on the following grounds:

a) Certified serious ill health of the student or a family member or dependent for whom the student is acting as a carer.

b) Internship or placement.

c) Accrued study breaks can be used as a reasonable adjustment where the student has a registered disability or long-term health condition with the university or is a registered carer. Such requests should be submitted upon accrual of one month of disrupted time.

RDD 8.5 A part-time student may request a study break, for a maximum of 24 months in total on the following grounds:

a) Certified serious ill health of the student or a family member or dependent for whom the student is acting as a carer.

b) Work related difficulties.

c) Domestic commitments.

d) Internship or placement.

e) Accrued study breaks can be used as a reasonable adjustment where the student has a registered disability or long-term health condition with the university or is a registered carer. Such requests should be submitted upon accrual of one month of disrupted time.

RDD 8.6 Following the submission of the thesis, students, regardless of mode of study, may only request a study break on the grounds of exceptional circumstances. Requests will to be considered by the Progress Board.

RDD 8.7 Full-time and part-time students may be granted a period of maternity, paternity, adoption or shared leave up to a maximum of 12 months and this will not count toward the maximum period of study, nor the maximum permitted period for a study break. Maternity, paternity, adoption and shared leave entitlements for students registered through Affiliated Research Centres are determined by the Affiliated Research Centre, up to the maximum period permitted by the university.

RDD 8.8 Upon return from a study break or maternity, paternity, adoption or shared leave the students and supervisors should have a return to study meeting.

9. Extension of Registration

RDD 9.1 Students approaching their maximum registration may in only truly exceptional circumstances apply to the Progress Board for an extension to their registration of up to a maximum of 12 months in total. Requests must be submitted no later than one month prior to the maximum registration date and should be accompanied by supporting evidence and an agreed plan of work for completion. Requests submitted after the maximum registration date will not be considered as the student will have been deemed to have withdrawn from the research degree programme (RDD 6.5).

RDD 9.2 Students seeking an extension to their registration must commit to meeting the minimum number of study hours per week (see RDD 7.4).

RDD 9.3 Extensions to registration are not permitted post thesis submission.

RDD 9.4 Extensions to registration are entirely independent of extensions to funding.

10. Change of Mode

RDD 10.1 Students may apply to the Progress Board for a change of mode of study, from full-time to part-time or vice versa and will be considered in the context of funding source and visa status. Such requests can only be actioned once. Retrospective requests will not be considered. Where approved the minimum and maximum registration periods will be calculated pro rata.

11. Withdrawal

RDD 11.1 When a student decides to terminate their registration with The Open University, the Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre must inform the Research Degrees Team using the relevant form and the Progress Board will note the decision. A decision to withdraw is absolute and cannot be reversed.

RDD 11.2 Any student who fails to engage repeatedly or take extended unauthorised absence will, following issue of a written warning, be deemed to have withdrawn.

12. De-registration

RDD 12.1 A student may be de-registered by the university on the following grounds:

a) Failure to engage with Academic Engagement and Attendance policy

b) Failure to make academic progress

c) Failure to complete upgrade successfully (RDD 14.4 & RDD 14.7) within the regulatory time frames (RDD 14.2 & RDD 14.5)

d) Failure to meet their fee liability

e) Failure to comply with the Code of practice for student discipline

f) Failure to comply with the Conditions of Registration for Postgraduate Research Students and these regulations which includes these regulations and the policies referred to therein

g) Where an investigation under the PGR Plagiarism and Research Misconduct Policy establishes serious failure to comply with the Research Code of Practice

h) Following recommendation from a fitness to study panel that registration is terminated

RDD 12.2 Where the academic progress of a student is unsatisfactory (RDD12.1b), the Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre must invoke the Procedures for addressing failure to make satisfactory academic progress outlined in Appendix 3.

RDD 12.3 Recommendations to de-register a student on the basis of RDD 12.1(a, b, c & d) will be considered by the Progress Board who, having considered all of the evidence, both academic and procedural, may:

a) Approve the recommendation

b) Propose that the Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre, put together a revision plan to support the student within a limited time frame. At the end of this time period the recommendation for de-registration will be reviewed.

RDD 12.4 A student who is de-registered has the right to appeal against the decision (see RDD 20.1).

13. Research Integrity and Ethics

RDD 13.1 All research degree studies must be conducted in line with the expectations of The Open University's Research Code of Practice.

RDD 13.2 All research projects involving data from human participants and/or human tissue must be referred to The Open University's Human Research Ethics Committee for review, or for students registered through Affiliated Research Centres the equivalent body in the Affiliated Research Centre. If the Affiliated Research Centre does not have an equivalent ethics review body, the project must be referred to The Open University's Human Research Ethics Committee for review. For such research projects, a favourable opinion from The Open University's Human Research Ethics Committee, or equivalent body in the Affiliated Research Centre, must be obtained before your research project commences. Alternatively, the student must be in receipt of formal confirmation from The Open University's Human Research Ethics Committee that a full review is not required.

RDD 13.3 All research projects involving animals must be referred to The Open University's Animal Welfare Ethical Review Body for review or for students registered through Affiliated Research Centres the equivalent body in the Affiliated Research Centre. Approval from The Open University's Animal Welfare Ethical Review Body or equivalent body in the Affiliated Research Centre, and a UK Home Office License where applicable, must be obtained before research project commences.

RDD 13.4 Where a student's research forms part of a much larger project, an agreement between all parties in relation to the use of data, data collection, the use of data from field work and/or placement, in the PhD thesis should be negotiated in advance, and an agreement in writing should be held by the lead supervisor and lodged on the student file held by the Graduate School.

RDD 13.5 Any activity that falls short of the expectations outlined in The Open University's Research Code of Practice will be dealt with via the Postgraduate Research Student Plagiarism and Research Misconduct Policy.

14. Upgrade

RDD 14.1 On admission to the MPhil/PhD programme all students, regardless of the ultimate degree aim, will be registered for the degree of Master of Philosophy (MPhil).

Master of Philosophy

RDD 14.2 For those students whose aim is to obtain an MPhil, confirmation of continued registration must be completed, including any revisions, within the following time frames:

a) 7 months for a full-time student

b) 14 months for a part-time student

and will follow the same upgrade process for students intending to obtain a PhD.

Extensions to these deadlines are only permissible in truly exceptional circumstances, where recommended by the Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre and with the prior approval of the Progress Board. It is expected that students who are unable to study will apply for a study break (RDD 8.1 to RDD 8.8).

RDD 14.3 The upgrade assessment is in four stages:

a) Submission by the student of a project report which includes:

   i) correct and comprehensive referencing

   ii) a viable research question

   iii) a critical literature review which situates the proposed research into appropriate context

   iv) a research proposal, including an outline and critical justification of the proposed method(s)

   v) where appropriate, preliminary data/ pilot data and analysis as required by the individual's project

   vi) a detailed, feasible, work plan demonstrating how the student is going to complete on time

   vii) disclosure about the use of Generative AI; where such tools contributed to ideation, data analysis, or text generation that directly influenced the semantics of the research content. The disclosure should specify what type of AI was used, how it was used, and what role it played in the creation and preparation of the upgrade submission.

b) Submission by the student of a concise summary of their skills audit, and the training and development undertaken. Where appropriate this may include competence in English language. This must be signed off by the Associate Dean Research or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator.

c) An oral presentation, by the student, of their research in a public forum to the satisfaction of their Associate Dean Research or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator.

d) An upgrade viva, conducted by a minimum of two assessors assigned by the Associate Dean Research or in the case of Affiliated Research Centre students the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator. The assessors must be independent, experienced academic researchers in a cognate discipline who can make an informed judgement on the quality of the student's work to date and their potential to meet the expectations outlined in Appendix 1. The assessor(s) should not have had any influence on the design or implementation of the student's research project. They may as part of the upgrade process provide guidance on future work. Neither the student's supervisors, nor the Independent Advisor may form part of the panel, although one or more supervisors may attend the upgrade viva as observers at the request of the student. It is recommended that the upgrade viva take place face to face with all of the participants in the same location. However further to the provisions outlined in RDD 18.6 a – e the viva may, at the student's or examiners' request, and providing that the supervisors have made provisions to support the student prior to and post viva, take place in a hybrid fashion (some participants online) or fully online (every participant engages online from separate locations). If reasonable adjustments are required for the upgrade viva these must be requested when the viva is being arranged, this does not preclude requests for unforeseen or exceptional circumstances which the Faculty should be notified of as soon as possible following the change of circumstances.

RDD 14.4 Following the assessment the assessors shall make one of the following recommendations through the Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre to the Progress Board who on consideration of the evidence may confirm one of the following outcomes:

a) registration for the degree of Master of Philosophy (MPhil); or

b) the student should be asked to revise their upgrade report. Revisions must normally be reviewed within the time frames outlined in RDD 14.2 and further registration will depend on it having been completed to the satisfaction of the assessors and Associate Dean Research or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator and confirmed by the Progress Board; or

c) the student should be de-registered due to failure to make satisfactory academic progress (RDD 12.1b).

Master of Philosophy with possibility of transfer to Doctor of Philosophy

RDD 14.5 Students whose aim is to obtain a Doctor of Philosophy must complete, including any revisions, the upgrade assessment within the following time frames:

a) 12 months for a full-time student;

b) 24 months for a part-time student.

Extensions to these deadlines are only permissible in truly exceptional circumstances or for pre-agreed specific funding schemes and approval will only be given where the student is making good academic progress, as recorded by the Progress Report Form. All extension to upgrade requests need to be recommended by the Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre and with the prior approval of the Progress Board. It is expected that students who are unable to study will apply to suspend their registration (RDD 8.1 to RDD 8.8).

RDD 14.6 The upgrade assessment is in four stages:

a) Submission by the student of a project report which includes:

i) correct and comprehensive referencing

ii) a viable research question

iii) a critical literature review which situates the proposed research

iv) a research proposal, including an outline and critical justification of the proposed method(s)

v) where appropriate, preliminary data/ pilot data and analysis as required by the individual's project

vi) a detailed, feasible, work plan demonstrating how the student is going to complete on time

vii) disclosure about the use of Generative AI; where such tools contributed to ideation, data analysis, or text generation that directly influenced the semantics of the research content. The disclosure should specify what type of AI was used, how it was used, and what role it played in the creation and preparation of the upgrade submission.

b) Submission by the student of a concise summary of their skills audit, training and development undertaken. Where appropriate this may include competence in English language. This must be signed off by the Associate Dean Research or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator.

c) An oral presentation by the student of their research in a public forum to the satisfaction of their Associate Dean Research or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator.

d) An upgrade viva, conducted by a minimum of two assessors appointed by the Associate Dean Research or in the case of Affiliated Research Centre students the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator. The assessors must be independent, experienced academic researchers in a cognate discipline who can make an informed judgement on the quality of the student's work to date and their potential to meet the expectations outlined in Appendix 1. The assessor(s) should not have any influence on the design or implementation of the student's research project. They may as part of the upgrade process provide guidance on future work. Neither the student's supervisors, nor the Independent Advisor may form part of the panel, although a supervisor may attend the upgrade viva as an observer at the request of the student.

It is recommended that the upgrade viva take place face to face with all of the participants in the same location. However further to the provisions outlined in RDD 18.6 a – e the viva may, at the student's or examiners' request, and providing that the supervisors have made provisions to support the student prior to and post viva, take place in a hybrid fashion (some participants online) or fully online (every participant engages online from separate locations). If reasonable adjustments are required for the upgrade viva these must be requested when the viva is being arranged, this does not preclude requests for unforeseen or exceptional circumstances which the Faculty should be notified of as soon as possible following the change of circumstances.

RDD 14.7 Following the assessment the assessors shall make one of the following recommendations to the Progress Board who on consideration of the evidence may confirm one of the following outcomes:

a) registration for the degree of Master of Philosophy (MPhil); or

b) registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD); or

c) the student should be asked to revise their upgrade report to complete any revisions. Revisions must normally be reviewed within the time frames outlined in RDD 14.5 and further registration will depend on it having been completed to the satisfaction of the assessors and Associate Dean Research and confirmed by the Progress Board; or

d) the student should be de-registered due to failure to make satisfactory academic progress (RDD 12.1b).

15. Academic Progress

RDD 15.1 The university requires all registered students and their supervisors to engage in the progress monitoring process until such a time as the student's registration ceases. The following exceptions apply:

a) Students who are completing minor corrections to their thesis following examination.

b) Students who have submitted their thesis and are awaiting their *viva voce*.

RDD 15.2 Students who are revising their thesis for resubmission are required to complete a progress report. Students who are completing substantial amendments to their thesis, should engage in local progress reporting as determined by the Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre.

RDD 15.3 Where a student is currently on a study break, or has been on a study break during the reporting period, a progress report should be submitted which provides an update on progress made during periods of active engagement, the current situation and plans to re-engage with the research programme upon the end of the study break. Where a student is on a study break at the time the progress report is due the supervisors must provide the report on the student's behalf.

RDD 15.4 Progress is formally monitored once per year. A single report should be submitted to the Research Degrees Team with oversight of progress by the Progress Board. The report should include indications as to:

a) Academic engagement and attendance

b) the extent to which a student has achieved performance targets to date;

c) academic progress;

d) research activities;

e) skills development;

f) and, any additional requirements specific to the degree programme.

For pre-upgrade students' progress should be monitored by the Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre at 5 months for full-time students and 10 months for part-time students with the expectation that the Faculties or Affiliated Research Centre will only escalate to the Research Degrees Team, for the attention of the Progress Board if there are progress concerns at this stage.

For all post upgrade students the formal reporting form should be completed annually and sent to the Research Degrees Team one month prior to re-registration.

RDD 15.5 Progress reports should be signed off by the Associate Dean Research or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator who should indicate whether:

a) the student is making satisfactory progress, or

b) there are academic concerns, or

c) the student is failing to make satisfactory progress or is failing to engage and attend satisfactorily.

Non-academic concerns should be highlighted in the report but should not be used to determine the academic recommendation

RDD 15.6 Where there are academic concerns (RDD 15.5b), the supervisors and student should, depending on the severity of those concerns either:

a) put an action plan in place to address the issues. A detailed report of progress against the action plan must be included in the subsequent progress monitoring form.

b) invoke the Procedures for addressing failure to make satisfactory academic progress, Appendix 3.

RDD 15.7 When a student is failing to make satisfactory progress (RDD 15.5c), the Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre should determine whether to:

a) continue to use the Procedures for addressing failure to make satisfactory academic progress, Appendix 3.

b) Recommend de-registration of the student RDD.12.1b

RDD 15.8 Faculties or Affiliated Research Centre may run a more frequent progress monitoring process which may include the requirement for progress reports to be submitted at interim stages.

RDD 15.9 Failure to submit a progress report as required by these regulations or by the Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre by the deadline may constitute a failure to evidence satisfactory progress. In such circumstances a student will not be permitted to re-register for the next academic year (RDD 6.2).

RDD 15.10 Failure of supervisors to facilitate the submission of a progress report will be deemed a line management concern and may result in mandatory training.

16. Thesis Submission

RDD 16.1 Students must give three months' notice, in writing, to the Research Degrees Team or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator, of their intention to submit a thesis for the award of a research degree. Notification should include confirmation of the thesis title, a provisional date for submission, and an indication of any additional digital files to be submitted.

RDD 16.2 Within the appropriate minimum and maximum periods of study for the degree (RDD 6.4), students are required to submit an electronic copy of their submitted thesis together with any supporting material to the Research Degrees Team or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator. In addition, the student must provide:

a) an abstract

b) a plain language summary

c) a CRediT Taxonomy (a standardised system for describing author contributions to a research article)

d) a completed Candidate Declaration Form indicating

i) any material that has been published

ii) material that has previously been submitted by them for a degree or other qualification to this or any other university or institution,

iii) where work is collaborative, what part of it is their independent contribution, normally presented at the start of each chapter or as a section in the introductory chapter.

iv) that the thesis count is within the regulations (RDD 16.5) or, if not, that a waiver has been granted by the Progress Board

v) where work is collaborative, acknowledgement that an agreement is in place between all parties in relation to the use of data, data collection, the use of data from field work and/or placement,

vi) that the material submitted is the copy that they intend to be examined, noting that once submitted the thesis will not be returned to the student for final amendments.

vii) Disclosure about the use of Generative AI; where such tools contributed to ideation, data analysis, or text generation that directly influenced the semantics of the research content. The disclosure should specify what type of AI was used, how it was used, and what role it played in the creation and preparation of the thesis submission.

The thesis must comply with regulations RDD 16.3 and RDD 16.4 and must conform to the standards outlined in The Open University thesis submission guidelines. Please note that Research Degrees Team are not able to accept any theses submitted after the maximum registration date.

RDD 16.3 The thesis must meet the standards for the degree outlined in Appendix 1.

RDD 16.4 The thesis must be written in English unless the student is in receipt of prior permission, under the terms of their letter of registration as a student of the university, to submit the work in Welsh or Gaelic.
Brief quotations in foreign languages are permitted; these should not normally exceed 150 words.

RDD 16.5 The length of the thesis must be appropriate to the subject area covered and must not (including footnotes, references and appendices) exceed:

a) 60,000 words for the Master of Philosophy

b) 100,000 words for the Doctor of Philosophy

c) 140,000 words for a creative writing Doctor of Philosophy.

In exceptional cases, a student may, with the support of their Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre request permission from the Progress Board to submit a thesis of greater length. Requests made prior to first submission of the thesis must be made a minimum of three months prior to submission of the thesis, at notification of submission (see RDD 16.1). Agreement to submit overlength theses is also contingent on agreement by the Examiners as sought by the Progress Board. Corrected theses submitted after an outcome of minor corrections and modification (RDD 18.11b) or an outcome of substantial amendments (RDD 18.11c) are not subject to the maximum word length. Theses being submitted for a second examination following an outcome of resubmission and re-viva following an outcome of major revision (RDD 18.11d) must comply to the maximum word count.

RDD 16.6 The decision to submit a thesis rests with the candidate alone. Although a candidate would normally be unwise to submit the thesis for examination against the advice of the supervisor(s), it is the candidate's right to do so. Equally, a candidate must not assume that submission with supervisory agreement guarantees a successful outcome of the examination. Further:

a) If the supervisor(s) has any comments/concerns about the candidate's intention to submit, these should be noted on the Candidate Declaration Form.

b) Where the supervisor(s) report that they do not support the thesis submission on the basis that they do not consider that it meets the required standards for examination they must write a report to the Associate Dean Research or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator and to the candidate describing where the thesis falls short.

c) On receipt of the report the Associate Dean or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator should convene a meeting of mediation between the supervisors and the candidate to seek a solution. Where a solution is not reached a report describing where the thesis falls short and the steps taken to mediate should be forwarded to the Progress Board for note.

d) Candidates who submit their thesis against supervisor(s) advice do so at their own risk and will be asked to sign a statement acknowledging:

i) That in submitting their thesis against supervisor(s) advice they do so at their own risk;

ii) That any complaints about supervision or disagreements with supervisor(s) over thesis submission do not constitute grounds for appealing against an examination decision;

iii) That there is no guarantee of a change of supervision, should the examination outcome require revisions.

RDD 16.7 The volume of written material contained in a thesis that contains significant non-text outputs should not exceed the maximum word lengths outlined in RDD 16.5a and RDD 16.5b.

RDD 16.8 The written component of all thesis should include, *inter alia*, strong arguments that:

a) convey the conceptual underpinning of the research in the context of the field;

b) thoroughly locate the research within the relevant literature;

c) clearly and fully explain the methodology used;

d) provide a clear explanation of how any additional outputs exemplify and develop the ideas described in the written material;

e) lead to a conclusion that, at a minimum, should summarise the key findings of the research and its relevance to the extant literature.

A detailed exposition of practices and/or technical skills in themselves is not a requirement, nor a substitute for a part or whole of an MPhil or PhD thesis.

Creative writing thesis

RDD 16.9 Students may submit their own creative work forms together with the thesis, if those creative work forms are essential to the thesis, as a point of origin or reference, or as a substantial part of the intellectual enquiry. The creative work must be clearly presented in relation to the argument of the written thesis, and the creative work should be set in its relevant theoretical, historical, and critical or design context. The final submission must be accompanied by some permanent record of the creative work, which where practicable is bound within the thesis. Combined word lengths should adhere to the provisions contained within RDD 16.5c.

17. Appointment of the Examination Panel

RDD 17.1 A thesis submitted for the award of a research degree will be submitted to an examination panel approved by the Progress Board.

RDD 17.2 Recommendations for the constitution of an examination panel must be made a minimum of 3 months ahead of thesis submission, in tandem with the student's intention to submit (RDD 16.1) and no later than three months before the maximum registration date. Recommendations are made to the Progress Board by the Associate Dean Research or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator in consultation with the supervisors.

RDD 17.3 The constitution of an examination panel must include an independent examination panel Chair and either:

a) An internal and a minimum of one external examiner

b) A minimum of two external examiners.

Where a student is an employee of The Open University the panel must include a minimum of two external examiners.

RDD 17.4 Those nominated for appointment as members of an examination panel should be independent and should not have had any influence on the design or implementation of the student's research project. Any potential conflicts of interest (see Appendix 4 for a non-exhaustive list) should be declared at the point of nomination.

RDD 17.5 Notwithstanding RDD 17.4 the Progress Board may, on receipt of a detailed explanatory statement from the Associate Dean or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator, deem that the conflict of interest does not constitute a barrier to the integrity of the examination process. Such decisions must be fully evidenced and documented.

RDD 17.6 Examination panels are appointed for the duration of the examination process, including resubmission and re-examination, unless exceptional circumstances arise.

Examination Panel Chair

RDD 17.7 The appointment of an independent examination panel Chair (see Appendix 4) should be made against the following criteria:

a) Experience of UK research degree examination as an examiner and normally of research degree supervision to successful completion.

b) Currently a member of academic or research staff at The Open University or Affiliated Research Centre of Lecturer or Research Associate status or above.

c) Familiarity with the research degree regulations and QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications for the award of research degrees Appendix 1.

d) Has received, or will be in receipt of, prior to the *viva voce* examination, training in the roles and responsibilities of the Chair.

e) Training must not take the form of shadowing a nominated Chair during a student's *viva voce* exam.

A Chair should not be currently registered for a research degree, other than a Higher Doctorate, at this or any other institution.

RDD 17.8 Visiting professors/academics, research fellows (including post-doctoral researchers), emeritus professors and honorary associates of the university or Affiliated Research Centre may be appointed as a Chair provided that they meet the criteria set out in RDD 17.7.

RDD 17.9 The role of the examination panel Chair is neutral in the assessment process and should take no part in the actual assessment of the thesis including questioning the candidate during the viva or bear any influence on the time available for the examiners to conduct their examination. It is the role of the examination panel Chair:

a) to oversee, and to inform, the Research Degrees Team of the arrangements for the examination;

b) to ensure that the examiners prepare independent Pre-Viva Report Forms (RDD 18.4) in a timely manner;

c) to identify with the examiners the main points to be raised at the examination;

d) to confirm with the examiners and the observer the role of the observer at the examination and in the examiners' meetings if invited to attend to answer a specific question;

e) in cases where the submitted thesis contains significant non-text outputs, to take account of the specific requirements and ensure that all members of the panel, the student and the observer are fully briefed as to how the examination will proceed;

f) to chair the examination and the examiners' pre- and post-examination meetings;

g) to ensure that the examination is conducted according to the university's regulations and procedures and that the examiners are able to complete their oral examination to their satisfaction;

h) to ensure that the Examination Report Form is completed diligently and agreed by all the examiners at the end of the examination. This should include a report on the examination and a recommendation on the award of the degree. If amendments are required, they should be specified in the relevant section of the Examination Report Form. Attachments can be added if necessary. Typographical errors may be annotated on an electronic copy of the thesis and submitted with the Examination Report Form. Corrections above the level of typographical errors must be explicitly stated in the Examination Report Form and if typographical corrections are deemed essential to the award of the degree, as opposed to suggested only, they must also be explicitly stated in the Examination Report Form.

i) to ensure that any amendments specified in the Examination Report Form match the criteria / examples associated with the appropriate recommended outcome in regulation RDD 18.11;

j) to send by email the completed Examination Report Form, and the examiners' independent pre-viva reports to the Research Degrees Team or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator for onward transmission to the Research Degrees Team, within two working days of the *viva voce*;

k) to clarify to participants in the examination that the recommended outcome is preliminary and subject to approval by the Research Degree Examination Results Approval Committee, and to ensure that in the light of this the feedback given to the student is appropriate.

Examiners

RDD 17.10 The appointment of examiners should be made against the following criteria:

a) Be qualified and have current experience and expertise in the field of the thesis to be examined.

b) Have experience of UK research degree supervision to successful completion and/or examination.

c) Collectively have experience of examining a minimum of five UK Doctoral degrees for the examination of a PhD or a minimum of five UK MPhils or Doctoral degrees for the examination of a MPhil.

An examiner should not be currently registered for a research degree, other than a Higher Doctorate, at this or any other institution.

RDD 17.11 Internal examiners should be members of academic staff at The Open University or Affiliated Research Centre of Lecturer status or above. Visiting professors/academics, external supervisors who are holders of a contract with The Open University or an Affiliated Research Centre to act as an external supervisor for students other than the examinee, research fellows (including post-doctoral researchers), emeritus professors and honorary associates of the university or Affiliated Research Centre may be appointed as internal examiners provided that they meet the criteria set out in RDD 17.10. Associate Lecturers who also hold an academic position and who are actively engaged in research at the Open University or elsewhere, as evidenced by their CV, may be appointed as internal examiners.

RDD 17.12 External examiners should normally be members of academic staff at a university or research institution, at Lecturer status or above. They should not normally be from the same department as the student's external supervisor.

RDD 17.13 Former members of The Open University staff or an Affiliated Research Centre may not be appointed as an external examiner unless they left the university at least three years previously.

RDD 17.14 Associate Lectures, retired or emeritus staff of The Open University or Affiliated Research Centre may not be appointed as external examiners.

RDD 17.15 It is the role of the examiners to:

a) Abide by the university's contractual confidentiality statement:

   i) As set out in the External Examiner Acceptance form

   ii) As set out in Appendix 5.

b) Prepare an independent Pre-Viva Report Form, (RDD 18.4).

c) Identify the main points to be raised at the examination.

d) Assess with the other examiner(s) whether the student has met the requirements of the relevant degree.

e) Make a recommendation with the other examiner(s) on the award of the degree and any amendments required.

f) Check corrections/amendments to the thesis following the *viva voce* examination as specified in RDD 18.11.

g) Abide by the university's contractual confidentiality statement (Appendix 5).

RDD 17.16 Once the panel is appointed all communication with the examiners on matters related to the thesis and or/the examination until such a time as there is a final outcome must be carried out through the panel Chair, the Research Degrees Team, the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator, the Chair of Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee or the Progress Board. The supervisors and student must only communicate via the examination panel Chair if they need to seek clarification on any matter, before or after examination.

Observers

RDD 17.17 One of the student's supervisors (or other member of the school approved by the Associate Dean Research or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator) may, at the request of the student, be present at the examination in the role of observer to support the student. The request must be confirmed in writing to the Research Degrees Team.

RDD 17.18 The role of the observer is to attend the *viva voce* and to:

a) Provide the candidate with a reassuring presence.

b) Provide post viva support to the student in the interpretation of the examination panel's requests for any amendments to the thesis.

c) The observer must play no part in the viva, nor interact with the student or the examiners during the viva, except where there are concerns over the welfare of the student.

RDD 17.19 In addition the observer may, at the request of the examiners, provide an explanation to the examination panel at either the pre- or post-viva examination meeting on an aspect of the student's research e.g., relating to problems with access to data. The participation of an observer in these meetings should be limited to answering specific requests for information from the examiners.

RDD 17.20 It is not permissible for any other additional persons to be present at the examination, subject to the provisions of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001.

18. Examination

RDD 18.1 The examination of a MPhil or a PhD will have the following stages:

a) Preliminary assessment of the submitted thesis by the examiners.

b) The defence of the thesis during an oral examination.

c) The assessment and re-examination of any revisions, as appropriate.

RDD 18.2 Upon receipt of the thesis and associated documentation (RDD 16.2), and providing that the examination panel has been approved (RDD 17.1), the Research Degrees Team Research or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator where the student is registered through an Affiliated Research Centre, is solely responsible for confirming receipt to the Chair and sending copies to the panel together with a copy of Part 1 of the Candidate Declaration Form.

RDD 18.3 Upon receipt of the thesis, the examination panel Chair should contact the examiners, the student and the observer to make arrangements for the *viva voce*.

Independent Report Forms

RDD 18.4 Each examiner is required to read the thesis and consider whether it satisfies the requirements for the degree as outlined in Appendix 1. They should each then complete and submit, in confidence and independently of all other parties, the Pre-Viva Report Form to the examination panel Chair normally a minimum of five working days before the examination. The forms should be forwarded in confidence to the Research Degrees Team, or where the student is registered through an Affiliated Research Centre, the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator, by the examination panel Chair upon receipt.

RDD 18.5 Upon receipt of the Pre-Viva Report Forms from all of the examiners, the examination panel Chair may share them in confidence across the examination panel. They should not be shared with the student, their supervisors or the observer. Any breach of the confidentiality of the forms and recommendations therein may invalidate the examination.

Participation

RDD 18.6 All examiners must participate in the oral examination. It is recommended that the *viva voce* examination will take place face to face with all of the participants in the same location, however further to the provisions outlined below the viva voce examination may, at the student's or examiners' request, take place in a hybrid fashion (some participants online) or fully online (every participant engages online from separate locations).

a) the student must give signed consent to being examined by a panel where the external examiner(s) is/are participating by video conference or where each participant is engaging remotely;

b) there is reliable and effective technology, in most cases this will be video conferencing facilities, at The Open University campus or the Affiliated Research Centre or other location where the participants are located, and that this is used as the means of conducting the examination remotely;

c) The Open University Faculty or the Affiliated Research Centre will accept responsibility for the technical arrangements for the *viva voce* examination;

d) contingency arrangements will be made should the technology fail on the day. The backup should be of a comparable standard (e.g. Skype or telephone conferencing). Please note however that video conference is the requisite means of conducting a *viva voce* examination with a remote participant. Where a contingency is put into place the arrangement must be discussed and agreed with the student.

e) wherever the *viva voce* takes place, the supervisory team must ensure that the student has appropriate support before and after the examination, and written evidence of this will be provided to the Examination Panel Chair.

RDD 18.7 The student must attend and participate in the entire viva voce examination and failure to do so will lead to an outcome of 'fail' with no automatic right to a second viva voce examination. Reasonable for the viva should be requested in the 'Notice to Submit'. This does not preclude requests for unforeseen or exceptional circumstances which the Graduate School should be notified of as soon as possible following the change of circumstances If reasonable adjustments are required for the viva these must be requested a minimum of two weeks prior to the viva date.

Viva voce examination

RDD 18.8 The examination panel should meet prior to the examination to:

a) Consider the preliminary reports and the thesis.

b) Confirm the structure of the questioning and the main points to be raised at the examination.

c) Identify any issues that require additional information from the observer.

The observer should not be present at this meeting unless RDD 18.8c applies.

RDD 18.9 The examination should cover all aspects of the thesis and confirm that the thesis is the student's own original work.

RDD 18.10 Following the examination the examination panel should meet in the absence of the student to discuss the recommended outcome and complete the Examination Report Form. The observer may only be present at the request of the examination panel.

Outcomes

RDD 18.11 The following recommendations are available to the examination panel:

a) The student be awarded the degree.

b) The student be awarded the degree subject to minor corrections and modifications to the thesis.

c) The student be awarded the degree subject to substantial amendments to the thesis.

d) The student be permitted to resubmit their thesis for re-examination and re-viva following major revision.

e) In the case of a PhD examination, the student be awarded the degree of MPhil subject to the presentation of the thesis amended to the satisfaction of the examiners and which must meet the expectations for the award as set out in Appendix 1.

f) In the case of a PhD examination, the student be permitted to resubmit their thesis for re-examination and re-viva for a MPhil award following major revision.

g) The student be not awarded the degree and not be permitted to be re-examined.

Where the panel cannot provide a unanimous recommendation please invoke regulations RDD 18.28 to RDD 18.29. The outcome should be based solely on the quality of the submission and examination. It should not be influenced by any information that would affect the student's ability to complete the corrections within the permitted time frames. Any information provided that would support the need for a longer time frame for completing corrections can be put forward to Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee for their consideration.

Consideration of the outcome following the viva voce

RDD 18.12 Within two working days of the *viva voce* examination, the examination panel Chair must submit the completed Examination Report Form and the Pre-Viva Report Forms to the Research Degrees Team or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator for onward transmission to the Research Degrees Team. These will be forwarded to the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee for consideration as outlined in Appendix 6.

RDD 18.13 Normally within 5 working days of receipt of the Examination Report Form and the Pre-Viva Report Forms the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee may:

a) Ratify the recommendation of the examination panel. Where the Committee approves a recommendation that the student be awarded the degree, the Committee will formally approve the award at this stage.

b) Request further clarification from the examination panel regarding the recommended outcome.

c) Approve an alternative outcome – when in exceptional circumstances and following consultation with the examination panel, where there continues to be a demonstrable inconsistency between the recommendation of the exam panel and other approved examination results.

RDD 18.14 Upon receipt of the decision from the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee, the Research Degrees Team will send the examination outcome letter together with a copy of the Examination Report Form to the student, the supervisors and the Associate Dean Research or for those students registered through Affiliated Research Centres, the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator, for onward transmission to the student and other relevant stakeholders.

Corrections, modifications and amendments

RDD 18.15 Where the examiners are satisfied that the student has reached the standard required for the degree but consider that the candidate's thesis requires additional explanatory information or some amendments and corrections, they may recommend that the degree be awarded subject to the candidate amending the thesis (RDD 18.11b or c). In such circumstances the following will apply:

Where the original outcome is 'minor corrections and modifications':

a) Where the outcome awarded is 'subject to minor corrections and modifications' (RDD 18.11b) the student must complete and submit the corrected thesis and a document that explains how they have met the requirements to the Research Degrees Team or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator, for onward transmission to the nominated examiner, within three months of the date of the examination outcome letter.

b) The corrections and modifications must be made to the satisfaction of at least one examiner as agreed by the examiners following the *viva voce*. Examiners may not make additional requirements at this stage.

c) Upon receipt of the corrected thesis, the nominated examiner will, within one month of receipt, independently complete the Corrected Thesis Form and return it to the Research Degrees Team, or to the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator for onward transmission to the Research Degrees Team, making one of the following recommendations:

   i) the student has completed the corrections and modifications, has met the academic requirements and should be awarded the degree for which they were examined

   ii) for a PhD examination the student has failed to make the corrections and modifications and should be awarded a MPhil (subject to the provisions within RDD 18.11e)

   iii) the student should be not awarded the degree and should not be permitted to be re-examined.

d) Where the recommendation is that the student be awarded the degree for which they were examined (RDD 18.15ci) the Corrected Thesis Form will be forwarded to the Chair of the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee who may approve the award.

e) Where the recommendation is that the student has not completed the corrections and modifications to the required standards (RDD 18.12cii or iii), the corrected thesis must be considered by the other examiner(s) on the panel who will independently complete a copy of the Corrected Thesis Form. All the Corrected Thesis Forms will then be forwarded to the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee for consideration as follows:

   i) Where the examiners are not in agreement the regulations for non-unanimous decisions will be invoked (RDD 18.28 to RDD 18.29).

ii) Where the examiners are in agreement the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee may:

1) Ratify the recommendation of the examination panel. Where the Committee approves a recommendation that the student be awarded the degree, the Committee will formally approve the award at this stage.

2) Request further clarification from the examination panel regarding the recommended outcome.

3) Approve an alternative outcome – when in exceptional circumstances and following consultation with the examination panel where there continues to be a demonstrable inconsistency between the recommendation and other approved examination results.

Where the original outcome is ‘substantial amendments’:

a) Where the outcome of the original exam is ‘subject to substantial amendments’ (RDD 18.11c), the student must complete and submit the corrected thesis and an explanatory document demonstrating how they have met the requirements to the Research Degrees Team, or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator, for onward transmission to the examiners, within six months of the date of the examination outcome letter.

b) The amendments must be made to the satisfaction of all of the examiners. Examiners may not impose additional requirements at this stage.

c) Upon receipt of the corrected thesis, the examiners will, within one month of receipt, independently complete the Corrected Thesis Form and return it to the Research Degrees Team recommending one of the following options:

i) The student has completed the amendments, has met the academic requirements and should be awarded the degree for which they were examined.

ii) The student has not satisfactorily completed the amendments, or has introduced additional material that requires amendment, and should be permitted a further three months to make minor corrections and modifications. In such cases regulations RDD 18.15a to RDD 18.15e will apply because the new outcome is recommended 'Minor corrections and modifications'.

iii) For a PhD examination the student has failed to make the amendments and should be awarded a MPhil (subject to the provisions within RDD 18.11e).

iv) The student should be not awarded the degree and should not be permitted to be re-examined.

d) Where the recommendation is that the student be awarded the degree for which they were examined (RDD 18.15hi) the Corrected Thesis Forms will be forwarded to the Chair of the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee who may approve the award.

e) Where the recommendation is that the student has not completed the corrections and amendments to the required standards (RDD 18.15hii or iii), the Corrected Thesis Forms will be forwarded to the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee for consideration as follows:

i) Where the examiners are not in agreement the regulations for non-unanimous decisions will be invoked (RDD 18.28 to RDD 18.29).

ii) Where the examiners are in agreement the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee may:

1) Ratify the recommendation of the examination panel. Where the Committee approves a recommendation that the student be awarded the degree, the Committee will formally approve the award at this stage.

2) Request further clarification from the examination panel regarding the recommended outcome.

3) Approve an alternative outcome – when in exceptional circumstances and following consultation with the examination panel where there continues to be a demonstrable inconsistency between the Where the original outcome was ‘resubmission and re-examination’:

RDD 18.16 Where the examiners are not satisfied that the student has reached the standard required for the degree, they may recommend that the thesis is revised and resubmitted for re-examination. The student must resubmit the revised thesis to the Research Degrees Team or to the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator in the case of a student registered through an Affiliated Research Centre, within 12 months of the date of the examination outcome letter.

RDD 18.17 The revised thesis should be sent to the same examiners who participated in the original *viva voce*. In exceptional cases where an examiner is no longer available a new examiner will be appointed by the Progress Board in line with regulations RDD 17.1 to RDD 17.6 and RDD 17.10 to RDD 17.16.

RDD 18.18 The re-examination will follow the process set out in regulations RDD 18.1 to RDD 18.10.

RDD 18.19 The examiners are required to make a judgement as to whether the candidate has, following revision and re-examination as specified by the examiners on the basis of the previous examination, met the criteria for the relevant degree.

RDD 18.20 The following recommendations are available to the examination panel upon re-examination:

a) The student be awarded the degree.

b) The student be awarded the degree subject to minor corrections and modifications to the thesis (RDD 18.15a to e).

c) The student be awarded the degree subject to substantial amendments to the thesis (RDD 18.15f to j).

d) In the case of a PhD examination, the student be awarded the degree of MPhil subject to the presentation of the thesis amended to the satisfaction of the examiners and which must meet the expectations for the award as set out in Appendix 1.

e) The student should be not awarded the degree and should not be permitted to be re-examined.

No further re-examination will be permitted.

Consideration of the outcome following the re-examination after resubmission:

RDD 18.21 Within two working days of the re-examination, the examination panel Chair will provide the Research Degrees Team or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator for onward transmission to the Research Degrees Team, with the completed Examination Report Form and the *Pre-Viva Report Forms.* These will be forwarded together with copies of the Examination Report Form and the Pre-Viva Report Forms from the original *viva voce* to the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee for consideration.

RDD 18.22 Upon receipt of the Examination Report Form and the Pre-Viva Report Forms the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee may:

a) Ratify the recommendation of the examination panel. Where the Committee approves a recommendation that the student be awarded the degree, the Committee will formally approve the award at this stage.

b) Request further clarification from the examination panel regarding the recommended outcome.

c) Approve an alternative outcome – When in exceptional circumstances and following consultation with the examination panel where there continues to be a demonstrable inconsistency between the recommendation and other approved examination results.

RDD 18.23 Upon receipt of the decision from the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee, the Research Degrees Team will send the examination outcome letter together with a copy of the Examination Report Form to the student, the supervisors and the Associate Dean Research or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator for onward transmission to the student and other relevant stakeholders, in the case of students registered through Affiliated Research Centres.

Where the student is awarded an MPhil following a PhD examination:

RDD 18.24 Where the examiners are not satisfied that the student has reached the standard required for the degree for a Doctoral degree they may, either at the original *viva voce* or following re-examination, recommend that the student be awarded the degree of MPhil (RDD 18.11e or RDD 18.20d).

RDD 18.25 Where this recommendation is made following the original *viva voce* examination it may be an outright award or may involve minor corrections and amendments (in which case regulation RDD 18.15a to e applies), substantial amendments (in which case regulation RDD 18.15f to j applies) or resubmission and re-examination for a MPhil degree (in which case regulations RDD 18.16 to RDD 18.20 apply).

RDD 18.26 Where this recommendation is made following resubmission and re-examination it may be an outright award or may involve minor corrections and modifications (in which case regulation RDD 18.15a to e applies) or substantial amendments (in which case regulation RDD 18.15f to j applies). The option of resubmission and re-examination is not available at this stage.

Where there is no award and the student is not permitted to be re-examined:

RDD 18.27 Where the examiners are not satisfied that the student has reached the standard required for the award of a Doctoral degree and recommend that the student be not awarded the degree and not be permitted to be re-examined the Examination Report Form must include details of:

a) Why the candidate failed to meet the requirements of the relevant degree.

b) Why the examination panel is unable to recommend major revision and resubmission of the thesis.

c) Why, in the case of a PhD examination, a MPhil cannot be recommended.

Where the Examiners are not in agreement – there is a non-unanimous decision:

RDD 18.28 Where the recommendations are not unanimous immediately following the viva the Chair of the examination panel will seek a resolution during the post viva meeting. Where this is not possible, or following a non-unanimous decision following the submission of a revised thesis, the Chair of the examination panel will schedule a new meeting of the examiners to seek a resolution. If after the meeting the recommendations are still not unanimous, the Chair of the examination panel shall arrange a meeting of the examiners to seek a resolution. If this is not possible the Chair shall submit their report of the meeting(s), together with the examiners' separate reports and recommendations to the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee who may:

a) Accept a majority decision.

b) Accept the decision of the external examiner(s).

c) Request the Progress Board to appoint an additional external examiner.

RDD 18.29 Where an additional external examiner is appointed they shall not be informed of the recommendations of the other examiners. On receipt of the report from the additional external examiner the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee will reconsider the outcome and normally accept a majority decision.

Where the student fails to meet the deadlines for submission of amendments and/or revisions:

RDD 18.30 Where following a *viva voce* examination the student is unable to work they may apply for a study break (RDD 8.6).

RDD 18.31 In the absence of an approved study break students are expected to meet the deadline for the submission of their revised thesis. The Research Degrees Team is not authorised to accept any thesis submitted after the deadline. In such circumstances the matter will be referred Progress Board together with any evidence of mitigating circumstances which led to the failure to meet the deadline. The Progress Board may or may not accept the late submission.

19. Post Award Requirements

RDD 19.1 Following confirmation that the academic requirements for the award of the degree have been met students are required to submit a copy of their thesis and any associated documentation/materials to the university Library in accordance with the guidance within The Open University thesis submission guidelines. Students are expected to complete this within one week of the award letter. A degree certificate will only be issued upon completion of this requirement.

Embargo or restricted access to a thesis

RDD 19.2 The Open University has an open access policy on research outputs. It is therefore an expectation that a research degree thesis is made publicly available online through Open Research Online. Students are encouraged to make any research data publicly available online through the Open Research Data Online repository.

RDD 19.3 Requests for embargo of a thesis should usually be made, and approved, at the point of application. Where it is necessary to apply for confidentiality of the thesis after registration, the application should be made to the Research Degrees Team for joint consideration by the Progress board, but it is not guaranteed that an application for an embargo will be approved. No retrospective requests will be approved once the student's thesis is available on Open Research Online.

RDD 19.4 An application for confidentiality will normally only be approved in order to enable a patent application to be lodged or to protect commercially, nationally classified or politically sensitive material. A thesis shall not be restricted in this way in order to protect research leads. In consideration for theses containing a substantial amount of commercially publishable creative writing or artistic material, the student can redact sections of the thesis before making it freely available online but only if an intact and complete version of the thesis is still held by the university Library.

RDD 19.5 Where an embargo is warranted and justified the normal maximum period of confidentiality is two years, in exceptional circumstances the Progress Board may approve a longer period.

20. Appeals and Complaints

RDD 20.1 A student may make a request for the academic body charged with making decisions on admission, assessment, student progression or award to review a decision. Students may make such an appeal against a decision providing that they meet the criteria outlined in the university's appeals process.

RDD 20.2 A student may express their dissatisfaction concerning the provision of a programme of study or related academic or administrative service, which is not an appeal against a decision. Students may make such a complaint using the university's complaints process, or in the case of an Affiliated Research Centre student, the university's complaints process once the Affiliated Research Centre's complaints process has been exhausted.

RDD 20.3 A student must not take their appeal or complaint outside of the university until all internal processes have been exhausted and have been deemed unable to resolve the complaint or appeal.

Research degree qualification regulations specifically for Professional Doctorates

1. Degree name and standards

PD 1.1 The Open University shall award the degrees of Professional Doctorate to registered candidates (including those registered through Affiliated Research Centres) upon successful completion of approved programmes of advanced supervised teaching and research. The current offering comprises:

a) Doctorate in Education (referred to as the EdD). Holders of the qualification are, following award, permitted to use the letters EdD after their names.

b) Doctorate in Health & Social Care. Holders of the qualification are, following award, permitted to use the letters DHSC after their names.

PD 1.2 A Professional Doctorate may be awarded to a candidate who has demonstrated, through the presentation and defence of a thesis, to the satisfaction of the examiners, that the expectations outlined in Appendix 1, 1.1 have been met.

2. Requirements for Application

PD 2.1 An applicant seeking admission to a Professional Doctorate at or through the Open University should hold the minimum of a Master's degree in a cognate discipline from a UK university or other recognised degree-awarding body and have at least 2 years of relevant professional experience. The comparability of qualifications from outside the UK with The Open University requirements will be determined through reference to UK ENIC.

PD 2.2 Applicants holding qualifications other than those in PD 2.1 must demonstrate suitability for postgraduate level research based on professional experience, publications, written reports or other appropriate evidence of previous research related to the proposed PhD application, shall be taken into consideration. In addition, applicants must provide the names of qualified persons from whom the university may seek references as to the applicants' academic attainment and potential for undertaking research at this level. Applicants who do not hold any degree level qualifications will not be admitted and will not be eligible for consideration.

PD 2.3 Professional Doctorates are only available on a part-time basis.

PD 2.4 Where English is not the applicant's first language, the applicant must demonstrate sufficient proficiency in the English language to support successful study at research degree standard. It is usual to require IELTS scores that meet the minimum requirements of 6.5 overall score, and no less than 6.0 in any of the four elements (reading, writing, listening and speaking), or equivalent. Certificates must be no older than 2 years at the point of registration. Exceptions may be approved by the Progress Board upon the provision of equivalent evidence by the Faculty or the Affiliated Research Centre.

PD 2.5 Applicants for Professional Doctorates in a particular discipline may be required to fulfil additional entry requirements. These may include discipline specific knowledge, a higher minimum English language requirement and a professional qualification and/or equivalent experience. Discipline specific requirements are published in the Research Degrees Prospectus. Affiliated Research Centre specific requirements are published in each Affiliated Research Centre's recruitment documentation.

PD 2.6 The university can only accept applications for study in an approved field of research for which arrangements have been made in respect of either subject and/or methodological specific supervision and for which research facilities are available. Projects must be well-defined and must be completable within the regulatory timeframes (PD 6.4). The approved fields of research are revised annually and can be found in the Research Degrees Prospectus.

The approved fields of research for applicants registering through the Affiliated Research Centre programme will be determined by their Affiliated Research Centre.

PD 2.7 The university may accept applications for a programme of study from which the outputs will include significant material that would not be traditionally incorporated into a "book", for example audio or video files, datasets, large visual files such as drawings or, maps, code, software or digital renditions of physical artifacts (together "non-text outputs"). The outputs must be submitted as digital files for examination and digital archiving and should normally be submitted as common file formats. The requirements for the thesis in terms of argument, analysis, deployment of evidence and referencing are the same as for a thesis that does not contain these additional non-text outputs (see PD 15.7 to PD 15.9). The balance of evidence and argument in the research proposal shall reflect the anticipated balance between the written and non-text outputs that together contribute the final submission portfolio with approval of the Progress Board.

PD 2.8 Applicants must assign their intellectual property rights arising from research undertaken that contributes to the research degree to The Open University unless they are bound by an intellectual property agreement with a third party. Any such agreements must be brought to the attention of the university and approved at the point of application.

3. Admission

PD 3.1 Faculties and Affiliated Research Centres are responsible for managing the recruitment and fair selection of research students in accordance with the QAA Quality Code, the Equality Act 2010, and the Recruitment Guidelines and where applicable the equality legislation in the Affiliated Research Centre's country of location.

PD 3.2 A selection panel Chair is responsible for ensuring procedural integrity of the whole recruitment and selection process.

They are also responsible for ensuring that panel members and all staff involved in the recommendations for admission have undertaken the required training including unconscious bias and fair selection. A selection panel will include a minimum of two members, one of whom provides continuity of recruitment within the discipline, and one who is a potential member of the supervisory team or who provides subject expertise.

PD 3.3 All applicants must supply the following evidence in support of their application (Proof Identity checklist):

a) a completed application form

b) copies of their degree certificates

c) a copy of their research proposal, or a statement confirming suitability for registration, or a project description as requested by the Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre, noting that in some areas of the university applications are made to specific advertised projects

d) a copy of their passport, or other form of identification. Accepted documents include:

- Original birth certificate (UK birth certificate issued within 12 months of the date of birth in full form including those issued by UK authorities overseas such as Embassies High Commissions and HM Forces)
- EEA member state identity card
- Current UK or EEA photo card driving licence
- Full old-style driving licence
- Photographic registration cards for self-employed individuals in the construction industry -CIS4
- Benefit book or original notification letter from Benefits Agency
- Firearms or shotgun certificate
- Residence permit issued by the Home Office to EEA nationals on sight of own country passport
- National identity card bearing a photograph of the applicant.

e) the names of two independent referees

f) equal opportunities and Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) monitoring form.

g) In addition, and where applicable the following documentation must also be submitted:

h) transcripts of academic qualifications

i) certified translations of degree certificates and transcripts

j) copies of English language qualification certificates

k) list of publications or evidence of research experience

l) documentation supporting a change of name.

PD 3.4 No applicant may be admitted without prior interview and the receipt by the university of the references.

PD 3.5 To be admitted as a Professional Doctorate student of the university an applicant must:

a) comply with regulations PD 2.1 to PD 2.8 as appropriate

b) register in accordance with the instructions contained within their offer letter

c) agree to comply with the Conditions of Registration for Postgraduate Research Students, the Research Code of Practice, the Research Degrees Regulations and all policies relevant to the student journey, and or any updates to these throughout the period of registration

d) agree to comply with registration requirements and attend induction in person

e) pay or agree to pay the appropriate fees and charges

f) if a visa is required it must be appropriate and valid as per UKVI requirements.

PD 3.6 In addition to the above for applicants seeking direct registration with the Open University regulations PD 3.7 to PD 3.9 apply; for applicants seeking registration with the Open University through an Affiliated Research Centre regulations PD 3.10 to PD 3.12 apply.

Direct Registration

PD 3.7 Formal applications must be submitted to the relevant Faculty office. This does not preclude any preliminary discussion between an applicant and academic members of the Faculty. Having followed the recruitment process the faculty may make a recommendation for admission to the Progress Board. The faculty may inform applicants that they have made such a recommendation, but they cannot make any offers of registration, formal or informal, at this stage.

PD 3.8 Prior to applications being considered by the Progress Board they will be screened by the Research Degrees Team to ensure that applicants have met the entrance requirements.

PD 3.9 Approval for admission is granted by the Progress Board. In addition to the regulatory requirements any other terms and conditions will be provided in the offer letter.

Registration through an Affiliated Research Centre

PD 3.10 Formal applications must be made to the Affiliated Research Centre. This does not preclude any preliminary discussion between an applicant and academic members of the Affiliated Research Centre. If approved by the Affiliated Research Centre, the application for registration will then be forwarded to the Research Degrees Team for consideration. Having followed the recruitment process the Affiliated Research Centre may inform applicants that they have made such a recommendation, but they cannot make any offers of registration, formal or informal, at this stage.

PD 3.11 Prior to applications being considered by the Progress Board they will be screened by the Research Degrees Team to ensure that applicants have met the entrance requirements and, for relevant international students, satisfy the requirements of UK Visa and Immigration.

PD 3.12 Approval for admission is granted by the Progress Board following a recommendation by ARC Management Group. In addition to the regulatory requirements any other terms and conditions of registration with the university will be provided in the offer letter.

4. Supervision

PD 4.1 Upon admission to the first year of the programme students will be allocated a supervisory team. The supervisory team will be nominated by the Associate Dean Research in consultation with relevant stakeholders or in the case of students registered through the Affiliated Research Centres the Research Degrees Coordinator. The Progress Board considers and approves the appointment of supervisors upon admission and when any further changes are required. Students are not permitted to select their own supervisory team.

PD 4.2 Supervisory teams comprise a minimum of two supervisors one of whom must be internal. Additional external supervisors may be appointed where appropriate. The constitution of supervisory teams for students registered through an Affiliated Research Centre must comprise a minimum of two supervisors, at least one internal to the Affiliated Research Centre.

PD 4.3 Where the supervisory team includes an external supervisor, it is the responsibility of the internal supervisor(s) to:

a) Ensure that the external supervisor is carrying out their responsibilities to the student and to the university; this includes contributing to progress monitoring reports and ensuring that they are submitted at the required time.

b) Meet the student with the external supervisor face to face to discuss the research project at least once a year.

PD 4.4 External supervisors must abide by the university's contractual confidentiality statement (Appendix 5) and with any terms and conditions associated with any funding arrangements.

PD 4.5 Supervisors must meet all of the following criteria:

a) Hold an appointment as a member of academic staff, or a research fellow, at The Open University or an Affiliated Research Centre, and be actively researching. For external supervisors at another university, they must hold an appointment as a member of academic staff and be actively researching as a member of a research group of appropriate academic standing.

b) Possess current academic expertise in the chosen discipline. Current expertise will be evidenced by their CV.

c) Hold a doctorate. The expectation is that supervisors will have a research degree (usually a PhD or Professional Doctorate) or for some disciplines, supervisors may have demonstrated significant engagement within their research or practice field in the absence of a research degree, as evidenced by their CV. Such variances require approval in advance by Progress Board.

d) Have sufficient time to carry out their responsibilities in the provision of quality supervision and support for students.

e) Are willing to commit to providing supervision for the duration of the student's studies.

f) Have read and confirmed their understanding of these regulations and of any updates.

The supervisory team collectively must have experience of supervising at least one UK Doctorate from the point of registration to successful completion, and at least one member of the team must be an active researcher involved in research within their chosen discipline as evidenced through peer reviewed outputs.

PD 4.6 One of the supervisors internal to the university or the Affiliated Research Centre will be the lead supervisor and will take day to day responsibility for the administrative issues and processes required for student registration, progression, submission and completion within the time frames outlined within these regulations. Where the lead supervisor does not have experience of supervising a UK Doctorate student to successful completion (PD 4.5) the supervisor on the team with the requisite UK Doctorate experience must act as a mentor to the lead supervisor. Regardless of experience or role it is the responsibility of all supervisors to ensure to the best of their ability that they work with the student to ensure that all elements of a student's registration, including submission and completion are understood and undertaken within the regulatory timescales.

PD 4.7 Supervisors should not be registered for a research degree themselves other than a Higher Doctorate, nor should they be in a close personal relationship with the student they are supervising. Supervisors should not normally be in a close personal relationship with any other member of the supervision team, nor should there be any other significant conflict of interest (see Appendix 4 for a non-exhaustive list). Where a potential conflict of interest exists or develops during the course of the student's research degree registration, the supervisor(s) must declare this, for consideration by the Progress Board.

PD 4.8 Research fellows (including post-doctoral researchers), emeritus professors of the university and honorary associates of the Open University may be appointed as university internal supervisors (not as external supervisors), provided that they and the other members of the supervisory team collectively meet the requirements of PD 4.5. Associate Lecturers may be appointed as supervisors on a separate contract provided that they have a substantive academic position or are contracted to undertake research at the Open University or another organisation. Visiting academics may be appointed as external supervisors on a separate contract.

Those appointed as supervisors for Affiliated Research Centre students must have a contract for supervision with the Affiliated Research Centre. With the exception of academic staff who can through their associate status demonstrate that they are contributing to research activities in the university or Affiliated Research Centre, retired members of staff are not eligible to join supervisory teams at the start of a new studentship but may continue to supervise to completion any students registered at the time of retirement providing the supervisory team as a whole is regulatory.

PD 4.9 Students are expected to have regular formal scheduled meetings with their ~~internal~~ supervisors. These formal meetings should result in an agreed set of supervisory notes that record the discussion. Meetings should be held a minimum of five times per year. Informal meetings, without the need for an agreed set of notes, can be held as required. Regardless, supervisors should keep sufficient notes to provide an accurate record of the student's journey. Meeting notes should be stored on the agreed management system.

PD 4.10 Where a supervisor is absent for a period of three months or more, alternative supervisory arrangements must be put in place and approved by the Progress Board. Upon the return of a supervisor following such a period of extended leave discussions must take place with the Associate Dean Research, or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator, as appropriate, regarding the viability of them resuming the role.

All changes to any supervisory team must be approved by the Progress Board. Whilst students may request a change to their supervisory team, this is not guaranteed and appointment of new supervisors cannot be initiated by the student.

PD 4.11 Faculties and Affiliated Research Centres are responsible for allocating sufficient time for supervisors to carry out the duties required for quality supervision and support of students.

PD 4.12 Supervisors are required to undertake initial training within the first 12 months of beginning the role within the university or within the Affiliated Research Centre, and then after every four years. This includes experienced supervisors who are new to the university or Affiliated Research Centre as well as supervisors who are new to the role. All supervisors are required to meet the expectations of the Research Degrees Committee with regard to their continued professional development as outlined in Appendix 2.

PD 4.13 Students and supervisors are expected to abide by the Code of practice for supervisors and research students see Appendix 2 and the Supervision Policy.

5. Independent Advisors

PD 5.1 Within one month of registration students will be formally notified by their academic unit or discipline as to the name and contact details of their Independent Advisor.

PD 5.2 The Independent Advisor is appointed by the Associate Dean Research, or for those students registered through an Affiliated Research Centre, the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator.

PD 5.3 The requirements for Independent Advisors are as follows:

a) Independent Advisors must be members of academic staff and have some research degree supervision experience.

b) Independent Advisors should not normally be senior officers of The Open University or Affiliated Research Centre with responsibility for the research degree programme.

c) Independent Advisors must act professionally and in the best interests of the student, irrespective of any professional or social relationship with either the student or the supervisors.

d) Independent Advisors must be offered to all new students by the fifth month of their registration and then annually in the first quarter of the calendar year (January - March).

e) Independent Advisors should be available for consultation by the student throughout the year.

f) Independent Advisor sessions may be conducted by telephone or email.

g) Both the Independent Advisor and the student should have the right to request a changed allocation, and the arrangements put in place by academic units should be designed to facilitate this with maximum ease.

h) Independent Advisors should allow students to discuss issues in confidence, unless it is agreed that further action is needed, or it is of a serious nature e.g. bullying and harassment.

i) Academic units (or schools) must provide students with written information about the status and purpose of any Independent Advisor records.

j) Any records on file must be agreed by both the student and the Independent Advisor and kept in a secure location.

k) Independent Advisors should be responsible for monitoring any follow-up or should involve the Associate Dean Research or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator if difficulties arise that cannot easily be resolved.

l) Associate Deans Research or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator are required to confirm on all progress reports the name of the Independent Advisor and the date on which the latest Independent Advisors session took place or was offered to the student.

m) Independent Advisors cannot be appointed as assessors for upgrade nor as examiners for the students for whom they act, or have acted for, in this capacity.

PD 5.4 Notwithstanding PD 5.3h a Independent Advisor who has genuine concerns regarding the health and welfare of a student or other parties should raise the issues discussed with appropriate specialists within the university or Affiliated Research Centre, in confidence.

6. Registration and Re-registration

PD 6.1 Entry may be permitted for direct registration with The Open University in October each year. Applicants registering through the Affiliated Research Centre programme may enter at points determined by their Affiliated Research Centre within parameters approved by the university. The registration date for all students will be the first day of the month in which they are registered.

PD 6.2 Students will be re-registered annually, on the anniversary date of their initial registration, provided that they maintain academic progress and ensure that all fee liabilities are met. This applies until such a time as they meet their maximum registration period (see regulation PD 6.4), or complete their studies, or withdraw from registration, whichever is the sooner.

PD 6.3 In order to study for a degree, submit a thesis for examination and be awarded the degree a candidate must be a registered Professional Doctorate student of the university.

PD 6.4 The minimum period of study before submission of the thesis is four years. The maximum period of registration is eight years.

PD 6.5 Students who reach the maximum registration period without having submitted their thesis will be deemed to have withdrawn from the research degree programme.

PD 6.6 Research or other work undertaken before registration as a Professional Doctorate student cannot be counted as part of the minimum period of study. Prior work may not be included in the thesis.

Preparatory work undertaken by students wanting to register through an Affiliated Research Centre must not exceed one month before a formal application is submitted to The Open University.

PD 6.7 While registered as a Professional Doctorate student of The Open University a student may not register or study for any other degree or qualification at this university or at any other institution, unless granted permission by the Progress Board, on the recommendation of the Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre to do so as part of their research degree training.

7. Attendance

PD 7.1 Registered students may reside anywhere in the world. Students must be available to attend any residential courses in the UK. Where a student's health or other exceptional circumstances prevents attendance at residential courses, the Programme Leader may, having received prior notice, waive this requirement. Where a student is unable to attend a residential course that includes induction, alternative methods of provision must be established.

PD 7.2 Students are required to spend a minimum of 18.5 hours per week on their studies throughout their registration period.

PD 7.3 All students must comply with The Open University's policies and monitoring processes in relation to attendance, periods of absence, right to study and engagement with their studies.

8. Study break

PD 8.1 A Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre may submit a request for a study break to the Progress Board for consideration. Where possible such requests should be made in advance. A request can be initiated by the student or if the student is indisposed the supervisor(s) or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator must submit the request. Any request should be submitted together with the supporting evidence, if this is not available then the form should be submitted, and the supporting evidence should be forwarded to the Research Degrees Team as soon as possible thereafter. Study break requests should be submitted as soon as the event that requires a study break occurs. A student is not permitted to engage in any aspect of their studies whilst on an approved study break. A study break is not an automatic right and requests for retrospective study breaks, will not be considered.

PD 8.2 Study breaks do not count towards the maximum permitted period of study (see PD 6.4).

PD 8.3 Study breaks will normally only be approved by the Progress Board in periods of one or more months. Where the consequence of a study break is that the student will miss a substantive section of the programme it may be necessary for study breaks to be approved in 12-month blocks.

PD 8.4 A student may request a study break, for a maximum of 24 months in total, on the following grounds:

a) Certified serious ill health of the student or a family member or dependent for whom the student is acting as a carer

b) Work related difficulties

c) Domestic commitments

d) Internship or placement

e) Accrued study breaks can be used as a reasonable adjustment where the student has registered a disability or long-term health condition with the university or is a registered carer. Such requests should be submitted upon accrual of one month of disrupted time.

PD 8.5 Following the submission of the thesis, students may only request a study break on the grounds of exceptional circumstances. Requests will to be considered by the Progress Board.

PD 8.6 Students may be granted a period of maternity, paternity, adoption or shared leave up to a maximum of 12 months and this will not count toward the maximum period of study, nor the maximum permitted period for a study break. Maternity, paternity,
adoption and shared leave entitlements for students registered through Affiliated Research Centres are determined by the Affiliated Research Centre, up to the maximum period permitted by the university.

PD 8.7 Upon return from a study break or maternity, paternity, adoption or shared leave the students and supervisors should have a return to study meeting.

9. Extension of registration

PD 9.1 Students approaching their maximum registration may in only truly exceptional circumstances apply to the Progress Board for an extension to their registration of up to a maximum of 12 months in total. Requests must be submitted no later than one month prior to the maximum registration date and should be accompanied by supporting evidence and an agreed plan of work for completion. Requests submitted after the maximum registration date will not be considered as the student will have been deemed to have withdrawn from the research degree programme (PD 6.5).

PD 9.2 Students seeking an extension to their registration must commit to meeting the minimum number of study hours per week (see PD 7.2).

PD 9.3 Extensions to registration are not permitted post- thesis submission.

RD 10.4 Extensions to registration are entirely independent of extensions to funding.

10. Withdrawal

PD 10.1 When a student decides to terminate their registration with The Open University, the Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre must inform the Research Degrees Team using the relevant form and the Progress Board will note the decision. A decision to withdraw is absolute and cannot be reversed.

PD 10.2 Any student who fails to engage repeatedly or take extended unauthorised absence will, following issue of a written warning, be deemed to have withdrawn.

11. De-registration

PD 11.1 A student may be de-registered by the university on the following grounds:

a) A failure to engage with the Academic Engagement and Attendance policy

b) Failure to make academic progress

c) Failure to complete upgrade successfully (PD 13.5c) within the regulatory time frames (PD 13.1). This includes failure to successfully complete whatever the annual requirements are for academic progression during the pre-upgrade phase

d) Failure to meet their fee liability

e) Failure to comply with the Code of practice for student discipline

f) Failure to comply with the Conditions of Registration for Postgraduate Research Students and these regulations which includes these regulations and the policies referred to therein.

g) Where an investigation under the PGR Plagiarism and Research Misconduct Policy establishes serious failure to comply with the Research Code of Practice

h) Following recommendation from a fitness to study panel that registration is terminated

PD 11.2 Where the academic progress of a student is unsatisfactory (PD11.1a), the Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre must invoke the 'Procedures for addressing failure to make satisfactory academic progress' outlined in Appendix 3.

PD 11.3 Recommendations to de-register a student on the basis of PD11.1(a, c & d) will be considered by the Progress Board who, having considered all the evidence, both academic and procedural, may:

a) Approve the recommendation.

b) Propose that the Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre put together a revision plan to support the student within a limited time frame. At the end of this time period the recommendation for de-registration will be reviewed.

PD 11.4 A student who is de-registered has the right to appeal against the decision (see PD 19).

12. Research Integrity and Ethics

PD 12.1 All research degree studies must be conducted in line with the expectations of The Open University's Research Code of Practice .

PD12.2 All Professional Doctorate projects must be referred to The Open University's Human Research Ethics Committee for review. A favourable opinion from The Open University's Human Research Ethics Committee must be obtained before your research project commences. Alternatively, the student must be in receipt of formal confirmation from The Open University's Human Research Ethics Committee that a full review is not required.

PD 12.3 Where a student's research forms part of a much larger project, an agreement between all parties in relation to the use of data, data collection, the use of data from field work and/or placement, in the doctoral thesis should be negotiated in advance, and an agreement in writing should be held by the lead supervisor.

PD 12.4 Any activity that falls short of the expectations outlined in The Open University's Research Code of Practice. will be dealt with via the Postgraduate Research Student Plagiarism and Research Misconduct Policy.

13. Upgrade

PD 13.1 For those students whose aim is to obtain a Professional Doctorate upgrade must be completed within 24 months, including any revisions.

Extensions to this deadline are only permissible in exceptional circumstances, where recommended by the Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre and with the prior approval of the Progress Board. It is expected that students who are unable to study will apply for a study break (PD 8.1).

PD 13.2 The taught phase, or stage one, of a Professional Doctorate programme constitutes the upgrade period. Upgrade will be assessed via the completion of taught modules and a series of formative and summative assignments including a presentation of the research by poster in a public forum to the satisfaction of their Associate Dean Research or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator. These will include the development and assessment of the research proposal for the thesis.

PD 13.3 Individual written feedback on all formative and summative assessment elements will be made available to students.

PD 13.4 All formative assessment elements must be submitted. Student must include a disclosure about the use of Generative AI; where such tools contributed to ideation, data analysis, or text generation that directly influenced the semantics of the research content. The disclosure should specify what type of AI was used, how it was used, and what role it played in the creation and preparation of the submission. All summative assessment elements must be passed. A pass/fail or a mark or grade will be given to summative assessments. Individual programme handbooks will stipulate how a student will remedy failed assignments.

PD 13.5 Summative assessments will be marked and moderated internally before sending them to the External Examiners on the Professional Doctorate Assessment Board. Upon consideration of the assessments the Professional Doctorate Assessment Board will either:

a) confirm completion of upgrade and recommend to the Progress Board registration for the Professional Doctorate Degree; or

b) confirm that upgrade should be extended to enable the student to complete any revisions and complete the upgrade process within the time frames outlined in PD 13.1; or

c) recommend to Progress Board that the student should be de-registered due to failure to make satisfactory academic progress PD 11.1b).

The Assessment Board

PD 13.6 The Professional Doctorate Assessment Board will comprise:

a) the Associate Dean Research or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator (Chair)

b) the Professional Doctorate programme leaders

c) area leads from each programme

d) an external examiner for each programme

e) a secretary (non-voting member).

PD 13.7 Any changes to the constitution of the board will require prior approval from the Research Degrees Committee.

PD 13.8 Appointment of External Examiners for the taught component

Recommendations for the appointment of external examiners are made to the Progress Board by the Associate Dean Research or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator.

PD 13.9 The criteria for appointment of external examiners is as follows:

a) be independent (see Appendix 4);

b) have experience of supervising and/or examining professional doctorates.

c) be qualified and have current experience and expertise in the field of the Professional Doctorate to be examined;

d) have experience of examining UK Doctoral degrees;

e) normally be members of academic staff at a university or research institution, at Lecturer status or above.

f) the examiners should not:

i) be currently registered for a research degree, other than a Higher Doctorate, at this or any other institution;

ii) be a member of a governing body or committee of the appointing institution or one of its collaborative partners, or a current employee of the appointing institution or one of its collaborative partners;

iii) be anyone with a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student involved with the programme of study;

iv) be anyone required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the programme of study;

v) be anyone who is, or knows they will be, in a position to influence significantly the future of students on the programme of study;

vi) be anyone significantly involved in recent or current substantive collaborative research activities with a member of staff closely involved in the delivery, management or assessment of the programme(s) in question;

vii) be former staff or students of the institution unless a period of three years has elapsed, and all students taught/supervised by or with the external examiner have completed their programmes;

viii) be retired or emeritus staff of The Open University or an Affiliated Research Centre;

ix) be part of a reciprocal arrangement involving cognate programmes at another institution;

x) be part of the succession of an external examiner from an institution by a colleague from the same department in the same institution;

xi) be appointed if to do so would result in there being more than one external examiner from the same department of the same institution.

PD 13.10 The following specified categories of people are ineligible for appointment as External Examiners:

a) all Open University salaried staff (including Associate Lecturers);

b) residential school staff;

c) visiting members of academic staff;

d) part-time members of academic staff holding dual appointments;

e) consultants to the Programme Team, if they contributed to the writing of the module or persons contributing through the preparation or provision of teaching;

f) retirees from other Higher Education Institutions can be considered provided they have retired recently, and that they still maintain an affiliation with an institution of Higher Education in the UK (or equivalent).

PD 13.11 External Examiners will be normally appointed for a period of four years, subject to annual approval by the Progress Board In exceptional circumstances, a case can be made for the appointment to be extended an additional year. If External Examiners wish to terminate their appointment, this should normally take effect at the end of an academic

PD 13.12 Duties of External Examiners for the taught component

External examiners will be expected to perform the following duties in the taught programme:

a) to consider the two summative assessments produced during Stage 1, the taught period of the professional doctorates and to report to the Professional Doctorate Assessment Board on such revisions they may consider necessary;

b) to satisfy themselves as to the methods of assessment adopted (External Examiners may, if they wish, see examples of assignments and all material will be readily available if required);

c) to scrutinise the marked assessments and to give advice as necessary on the consistency and quality of the work and marking to the Professional Doctorate Assessment Board;

d) to attend meetings of the Professional Doctorate Assessment Board as required (this is likely to be an annual meeting, with a possible re-sit Board), indicate their agreement with the results, and provide an oral report at the end of the meeting;

e) to work within the university's policy on the retention of student data and records jointly with the Board, to approve the Final Results List of candidates by endorsing the criteria for the different grades of result;

f) to complete the External Examiner's Report Form and submit no later than 6 weeks after the Board meeting. There is not an expectation that reports on individual programmes would be published.

PD 13.13 The recommendations of the Professional Doctorate Assessment Board may be overruled by Progress Board.

Responses to External Examiner(s) Reports

PD 13.14 A formal response to the External Examiners' recommendations in their report will be sent from the relevant programme leader. External Examiners' reports will be made available to all stakeholders.

14. Academic Progress

PD 14.1 The university requires all registered students and their supervisors to engage in the progress monitoring process until such a time as the student's registration ceases.

PD 14.2 During Stage 1 of the programme (the taught phase) academic progress is monitored through the submission of a series of formative and summative assignments. The formative assignments are submitted to supervisors and must contain a statement on progress. Summative assignments are also marked by two independent examiners (PD 13.5).

PD 14.3 During Stage 2 of the programme (the research phase) academic progress is monitored by the completion and submission of Progress Report Forms on an annual basis to the Research Degrees Team. The following exception applies:

a) Students who are completing minor corrections to their thesis following examination.

b) Students who have submitted their thesis and are awaiting their viva voce.

PD 14.4 Students who are revising their thesis for resubmission are required to complete a progress report. Students who are completing substantial amendments to their thesis following examination are required to report progress to their supervisors that is then overseen by the Programme Leader.

PD 14.5 Where a student is currently on a study break, or has been on a study break during the reporting period, a progress report should be submitted which provides an update on progress made during periods of active engagement, the current situation and plans to re-engage with the research programme upon the end of the study break. Where a student is on a study break at the time the progress report is due the supervisors must provide the report on the student's behalf.

PD14.6 Progress is formally monitored once per year. A single report for the year should be submitted on an annual basis to the Research Degrees Team with oversight of progress by the Progress Board. The report should include indications as to:

a) Academic engagement and attendance as per the Academic Engagement and Attendance policy

b) the extent to which a student has achieved performance targets to date;

c) academic progress;

d) research activities;

e) skills development; and any additional requirements specific to the degree programme.

PD 14.7 Progress reports should be signed off by the Associate Dean Research or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator who should indicate whether:

a) the student is making satisfactory progress, or

b) there are academic concerns, or

c) the student is failing to make satisfactory progress or is failing to engage and attend satisfactorily.

Non-academic concerns should be highlighted in the report but should not be used to determine the academic recommendation.

PD 14.8 Where there are academic concerns (PD 14.7b), the supervisors and student should, depending on the severity of those concerns either:

a) put an action plan in place to address the issues. A detailed report of progress against the action plan must be included in the subsequent progress monitoring form.

b) invoke the Procedures for addressing failure to make satisfactory academic progress, Appendix 3.

PD 14.9 When a student is failing to make satisfactory progress (PD 14.7c), the Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre should determine whether to:

a) continue to use the Procedures for addressing failure to make satisfactory academic progress Procedures, Appendix 3.

b) recommend de-registration of the student PD 11.1b

PD 14.10 Faculties or Affiliated Research Centres may run a more frequent progress monitoring process, which may include the requirement for progress reports, to be submitted at interim stages.

PD 14.11 Failure to submit a progress report as required by these regulations or by the Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre by the deadline may constitute a failure to evidence satisfactory progress. In such circumstances a student will not be permitted to re-register for the next academic year (PD 6.2).

PD 14.12 Failure of supervisors to facilitate the submission of a progress report will be deemed a line management concern and may result in mandatory training.

15. Thesis Submission

PD 15.1 Students must give three months' notice, in writing, to the Research Degrees Team, or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator of their intention to submit a thesis for the award of a research degree. Notification should include confirmation of the thesis title, a provisional date for submission, and an indication of any additional digital files to be submitted.

PD 15.2 Within the appropriate minimum and maximum periods of study for the degree (PD 6.4), students are required to submit an electronic copy of their thesis together with any supporting material to the Research Degrees Team or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator. In addition, the student must provide:

a) an abstract

b) a plain language summary

c) a CRediT Taxonomy (a standardised system for describing author contributions to a research article)

d) a completed Candidate Declaration Form indicating:

i) any material that has been published,

ii) material that has previously been submitted by them for a degree or other qualification to this or any other university or institution,

iii) where work is collaborative, what part of it is their independent contribution, normally presented at the start of each chapter or as a section in the introductory chapter.

iv) that the thesis word count is within the regulations (PD 15.5) or, if not, that a waiver has been granted by the Progress Board

v) where work is collaborative, acknowledgement that an agreement is in place between all parties in relation to the use of data, data collection, the use of data from field work and/or placement

vi) that the material submitted is the copy that they intend to be examined, noting that once submitted the thesis will not be returned to the student for final amendments

vii) disclosure about the use of Generative AI; where such tools contributed to ideation, data analysis, or text generation that directly influenced the semantics of the research content. The disclosure should specify what type of AI was used, how it was used, and what role it played in the creation and preparation of the thesis submission. The thesis must comply with regulations PD 15.3 and PD 15.4 and must conform to the standards outlined in The Open University Thesis Submission Guidelines. Please note that Research Degrees Team are not able to accept any theses submitted after maximum registration date.

PD 15.3 The thesis must meet the standards for the degree outlined in Appendix 1.

PD 15.4 The thesis must be written in English unless the student is in receipt of prior permission, under the terms of their letter of registration as a student of the university, to submit the work in Welsh or Gaelic. Brief quotations in foreign languages are permitted; these should not normally exceed 150 words.

PD 15.5 The length of the thesis must not exceed 65,000 words. This word limit includes footnotes, bibliographies and references but excludes appendices. In exceptional cases, a student may, with the support of their Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre, request permission from the Progress Board to submit a thesis of greater length. Requests made prior to first submission of the thesis must be made a minimum of three months prior to submission of the thesis at notification of submission (see PD 15.1). Agreement to submit overlength theses is also contingent on agreement by the Examiners as sought by the Progress Board Corrected theses submitted after an outcome of minor corrections and modification (PD 17.11b) or an outcome of substantial amendments (PD 17.11c) are not subject to the maximum word length. Theses being submitted for a second examination following an outcome of resubmission and re-viva following an outcome of major revision (PD 17.11d) must comply to the maximum word count.

PD 15.6 The decision to submit a thesis rests with the candidate alone. Although a candidate would normally be unwise to submit the thesis for examination against the advice of the supervisor(s), it is the candidate's right to do so. Equally, a candidate must not assume that submission with supervisory agreement guarantees a successful outcome of the examination. Further:

a) If the supervisor(s) has any comments/concerns about the candidate's intention to submit, these should be noted on the Candidate Declaration Form.

b) Where the supervisor(s) report that they do not support the thesis submission on the basis that they do not consider that it meets the required standards for examination they must write a report to the Progress Board describing where the thesis falls short. The report should be copied to the Associate Dean Research or Affiliated Research Centre Co-ordinator and to the candidate.

c) Candidates who submit their thesis against supervisor(s) advice do so at their own risk and will be asked to sign a statement acknowledging:

i) That in submitting their thesis against supervisor(s) advice do so at their own risk;

ii) That any complaints about supervision or disagreements with their supervisor(s) over thesis submission do not constitute grounds for appealing against an examination decision;

iii) That there is no guarantee of a change of supervision, should the examination outcome require revisions.

PD 15.7 The volume of written material contained in thesis that contains significant non-text outputs should not exceed the maximum word lengths outlined in PD 15.5.

PD 15.8 The written component of all thesis should include, *inter alia*, strong arguments that:

a) convey the conceptual underpinning of the research in the context of the field;

b) thoroughly locate the research within the relevant literature;

c) clearly and fully explain the methodology used;

d) provide a clear explanation of how the non-text outputs exemplify and develop the ideas described in the written material;

e) lead to a conclusion that, at a minimum, should summarise the key findings of the research and its relevance to the extant literature.

f) A detailed exposition of practices and / or technical skills in themselves is not a requirement, nor a substitute for a part or whole of a Doctoral thesis.

16. Appointment of the Examination Panel

PD 16.1 A thesis submitted for the award of a research degree will be submitted to an examination panel approved by the Progress Board.

PD 16.2 Recommendations for the constitution of an examination panel must be made a minimum of 3 months ahead of thesis submission, in tandem with the student's intention to submit (RD 15.1) and no later than three months before the maximum registration date. Recommendations are made to the Progress Board by the Associate Dean Research or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator in consultation with the supervisors.

PD 16.3 The constitution of an examination panel must include an independent examination panel Chair and either:

a) An internal and a minimum of one external examiner

b) A minimum of two external examiners

Where a student is an employee of The Open University the panel must include a minimum of two external examiners.

PD 16.4 Those nominated for appointment to be members of an examination panel should be independent and should not have had any influence on the design or implementation of the student's research project. Any potential conflicts of interest (see Appendix 4 for a non-exhaustive list) should be declared at the point of nomination.

PD 16.5 Notwithstanding PD 16.4 Progress Board may, on receipt of a detailed explanatory statement from the Associate Dean Research or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator, deem that the conflict of interest does not constitute a barrier to the integrity of the examination process. Such decisions must be fully evidenced and documented.

PD 16.6 Examination panels are appointed for the duration of the examination process, including re-submission and re-examination, unless exceptional circumstances arise.

Examination Panel Chair

PD 16.7 The appointment of an independent examination panel Chair (see Appendix 4) should be made against the following criteria:

a) Experience of UK research degree examination as an examiner and normally of research degree supervision to successful completion.

b) Currently a member of academic or research staff at The Open University or Affiliated Research Centre of lecturer or Research Associate status or above.

c) Familiarity with the research degree regulations and the QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications for the award of research degrees Appendix 1.

d) Has received or will be in receipt of prior to the *viva voce* examination, training in the roles and responsibilities of the Chair.

e) Training must not take the form of shadowing a nominated Chair during a student's *viva voce* exam.

A Chair should not be currently registered for a research degree, other than a higher doctorate, at this or any other institution.

PD 16.8 Visiting professors/academics, research fellows (including post-doctoral researchers), emeritus professors of the university or Affiliated Research Centre and honorary associates of the university may be appointed as a Chair provided that they meet the criteria set out in PD 16.7.

PD 16.9 The role of the examination panel Chair is neutral in the assessment process and should take no part in the actual assessment of the thesis including questioning the candidate during the viva or bear any influence on the time available for the examiners to conduct their examination. It is the role of the examination panel Chair:

a) to oversee, and to inform the Research Degrees Team of, the arrangements for the examination;

b) to ensure that the examiners prepare independent Pre-Viva Report Forms (PD 17.4) in a timely manner;

c) to identify with the examiners the main points to be raised at the examination;

d) to confirm with the examiners and the observer the role of the observer at the examination and in the examiners' meetings if invited to answer a specific question;

e) in cases where the submitted thesis contains non-text outputs, to take account of the specific requirements and ensure that all members of the panel, the student and the observer are fully briefed as to how the examination will proceed;

f) to chair the examination and the examiners' pre- and post-examination meetings;

g) to ensure that the examination is conducted according to the university's regulations and procedures and that the examiners are able to complete their oral examination to their satisfaction;

h) to ensure that the Examination Report Form is completed diligently and agreed by all the examiners at the end of the examination. This should include a report on the examination and a recommendation on the award of the degree. If amendments are required, they should be specified in the relevant section of the Examination Report Form. Attachments can be added if necessary. Typographical errors may be annotated on an electronic copy of the thesis and submitted with the Examination Report Form. Corrections above the level of typographical errors must be explicitly stated in the Examination Report Form and if typographical corrections are deemed essential to the award of the degree, as opposed to suggested only, they must also be explicitly stated in the Examination Report Form.

i) to ensure that any amendments specified in the Examination Report Form match the criteria / examples associated with the appropriate recommended outcome in regulation PD 17.11;

j) to send by email the completed Examination Report Form, and the examiners' independent Pre-Viva Report Forms to the Research Degrees Team, or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator for onward transmission to the Research Degrees Team, within two working days of the *viva voce*;

k) to clarify to participants in the examination that the recommended outcome is preliminary and subject to approval by the Research Degree Examination Results Approval Committee, and to ensure that in the light of this the feedback given to the student is appropriate.

Examiners

PD 16.10 The appointment of examiners should be made against the following criteria:

a) Be qualified and have current experience and expertise in the field of the thesis to be examined.

b) Have experience of UK research degree supervision to successful completion and/or examination.

c) Collectively have experience of examining a minimum of five UK Doctoral degrees.

PD 16.11 Internal examiners should be members of academic staff at The Open University or Affiliated Research Centre of lecturer status or above. Visiting professors/academics, external supervisors, research fellows (including post-doctoral researchers), emeritus professors of the university and honorary associates of the university or Affiliated Research Centre may be appointed as internal examiners provided that they meet the criteria set out in PD 16.10. Associate Lecturers who also hold an academic position and are actively engaged in research at the Open University or elsewhere, as evidenced by their CV, may be appointed as internal examiners.

PD 16.12 External examiners should normally be members of academic staff at a university or research institution, at Lecturer status or above. They should not normally be from the same department as the student's external supervisor.

PD 16.13 Former members of The Open University Staff or an Affiliated Research Centre may not be appointed as an external examiner unless they left the university at least three years previously.

PD 16.14 Associate Lecturers, retired, or emeritus staff of the Open University or an Affiliated Research Centre may not be appointed as external examiners.

PD 16.15 It is the role of the examiners to:

a) Abide by the university's contractual confidentiality statement:

i) As set out in the External Examiner Acceptance form

ii) As set out in Appendix 5.

b) Prepare an independent Pre-Viva Report Form, (PD 17.4).

c) Identify the main points to be raised at the examination.

d) Assess with the other examiner(s) whether the student has met the requirements of the relevant degree.

e) Make a recommendation with the other examiner(s) on the award of the degree and any amendments required.

f) Check corrections/amendments to the thesis following the viva voce examination as specified in PD 17.11.

g) Abide by The Open University Confidentiality Statement (Appendix 5).

PD 16.16 Once the panel is appointed all communication with the examiners on matters related to the thesis and or/the examination until such a time as there is a final outcome must be done through the panel Chair, the Research Degrees Team, the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator, the Chair of Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee or the Progress Board. The supervisors and student must only communicate via the examination panel Chair if they need to seek clarification on any matter, before or after examination.

Observers

PD 16.17 One of the student's internal supervisors (or another member of the school approved by the Associate Dean Research or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator) may, at the request of the student, be present at the examination in the role of observer to support the student. The request must be confirmed in writing to the Research Degrees Team.

PD 16.18 The role of the observer is to attend the *viva voce* and to:

a) Provide the candidate with a reassuring presence.

b) Provide post-viva support to the student in the interpretation of the examination panel's requests for any amendments to the thesis.

c) The observer must play no part in the viva, nor interact with the student or the examiners during the viva, except where there are concerns over the welfare of the student.

PD 16.19 In addition, the observer may, at the request of the examiners, provide an explanation to the examination panel at either the pre- or post-viva examination meeting on an aspect of the student's research e.g., relating to problems with access to data. The participation of an observer in these meetings should be limited to answering specific requests for information from the examiners.

PD 16.20 It is not permissible for any other additional persons to be present at the examination, subject to the provisions of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001.

17. Examination

PD 17.1 The examination of a Professional Doctorate will have the following stages;

a) Preliminary assessment of the submitted thesis by the examiners.

b) The defence of the thesis during an oral examination.

c) The assessment and re-examination of any revisions, as appropriate.

PD 17.2 Upon receipt of the thesis and associated documentation (PD 15.2), and providing that the examination panel has been approved (PD 15.1), the Research Degrees Team, or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator where the student is registered through an Affiliated Research Centre is solely responsible for confirming receipt to the Chair and sending copies to the panel together with a copy of Part 1 of the Candidate Declaration Form.

PD 17.3 Upon receipt of the thesis, the examination panel Chair should contact the examiners, the student and the observer to make arrangements for the *viva voce*.

Independent Report Forms

PD 17.4 Each examiner is required to read the thesis and consider whether it satisfies the requirements for the degree as outlined in Appendix 1. They should each then complete and submit, in confidence and independently of all other parties, the Pre-Viva Report Form to the examination panel Chair normally a minimum five working days before the examination. The forms should be forwarded in confidence to the Research Degrees Team, or where the student is registered through an Affiliated Research Centre, the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator, by the examination panel Chair upon receipt.

PD 17.5 Upon receipt of the Pre-Viva Report Forms from all of the examiners, the examination panel Chair may share them in confidence across the examination panel. They should not be shared with the student, their supervisors or the observer. Any breach of the confidentiality of the forms and recommendations therein may invalidate the examination.

Participation

PD 17.6 All examiners must participate in the oral examination. It is recommended that the *viva voce* examination will take place face to face with all of the participants in the same location, however further to the provisions outlined below the viva voce examination may, at the student's or examiners' request, take place in a hybrid fashion (some participants online) or fully online (every participant engages online from separate locations).

a) the student must give signed consent to being examined by a panel where the external examiner(s) is/are participating by video conference or where each participant is engaging remotely;

b) there is reliable and effective technology, in most cases this will be video conferencing facilities, at The Open University campus or other location where the participants are located, and that this is used as the means of conducting the examination remotely;

c) The Open University Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre will accept responsibility for the technical arrangements for the *viva voce* examination;

d) contingency arrangements will be made should the technology fail on the day. The backup should be of a comparable standard (e.g., Skype or telephone conferencing). Please note however that video conference is the requisite means of conducting a *viva voce* examination with a remote participant. Where a contingency is put into place the arrangement must be discussed and agreed with the student.

e) wherever the *viva voce* takes place, the supervisory team must ensure that the student has appropriate support before and after the examination, and written evidence of this will be provided to the Examination Panel Chair.

PD 17.7 The student must attend and participate in the entire viva voce examination and failure to do so will lead to an outcome of 'fail' with no automatic right to a second v*iva voce* Examination. Reasonable adjustments for the viva should be requested in the Notice to Submit. This does not preclude requests for unforeseen or exceptional circumstances which the Graduate School should be notified of as soon as possible following the change of circumstances If reasonable adjustments are required for the viva these must be requested a minimum of two weeks prior to the viva date.

PD 17.8 The examination panel should meet prior to the examination to:

a) Consider the preliminary reports and the thesis.

b) Confirm the structure of the questioning and the main points to be raised at the examination.

c) Identify any issues that require additional information from the observer.

The observer should not be present at this meeting unless PD 17.8c applies.

PD 17.9 The examination should cover all aspects of the thesis and confirm that the thesis is the student's own original work.

PD 17.10 Following the examination the examination panel should meet in the absence of the student to discuss the recommended outcome and complete the Examination Report Form. The observer may only be present at the request of the examination panel.

Outcomes

PD 17.11 The following recommendations are available to the examination panel:

a) The student be awarded the degree.

b) The student be awarded the degree subject to minor corrections and modifications to the thesis.

c) The student be awarded the degree subject to substantial amendments to the thesis.

d) The student be permitted to re-submit their thesis for re-examination and re-viva following major revision.

e) The student be awarded the degree of MPhil subject to the presentation of the thesis amended to the satisfaction of the examiners and which must meet the expectations for the award as set out in Appendix 1.

f) The student be permitted to re-submit their thesis for re-examination and re-viva for an MPhil award following major revision.

g) The student be not awarded the degree and not be permitted to be re-examined.

Where the panel cannot provide a unanimous recommendation, please invoke regulations PD 17.28 – PD 17.29.

The outcome should not be influenced by any information that would impact on their ability to complete the corrections within the permitted timeframes. Any information provided that would support the need for a longer timeframe can be put forward to Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee for their consideration.

Consideration of outcome following the *Viva Voce*

PD 17.12 Within two working days of the *viva voce* examination, the examination panel Chair must submit the completed Examination Report Form and the Pre-Viva Report Forms to the Research Degrees Team, or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator for onward transmission to the Research Degrees Team. These will be forwarded to the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee for consideration as outlined in Appendix 6.

PD 17.13 Normally within 5 working days of receipt of the Examination Report Form and the Pre-Viva Report Forms the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee may:

a) Ratify the recommendation of the examination panel. Where the Committee approves a recommendation that the student be awarded the degree, the Committee will formally approve the award at this stage.

b) Request further clarification from the examination panel regarding the recommended outcome.

c) Approve an alternative outcome – when in exceptional circumstances and following consultation with the examination panel, where there continues to be a demonstrable inconsistency between the recommendation of the exam panel and other approved examination results.

PD 17.14 Upon receipt of the decision from the Research Degrees Examination Result Approval Committee, the Research Degrees Team will send the examination outcome letter together with a copy of the Examination Report Form to the student, the supervisors and the Associate Dean Research or for those students registered through Affiliated Research Centres, the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator, for onward transmission to the student and other relevant stakeholders.

Corrections, modifications and amendments

PD 17.15 Where the examiners are satisfied that the student has reached the standard required for the degree but consider that the candidate's thesis requires additional explanatory information or some amendments and corrections, they may recommend that the degree be awarded subject to the candidate amending the thesis (PD 17.11b or c). In such circumstances the following will apply:

Where the original outcome is 'minor corrections and modifications':

a) Where the outcome awarded is 'subject to minor corrections and modifications' (PD 17.11b) the student must complete and submit the corrected thesis and a document that explains how they have met the requirements to the Research Degrees Team, or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator, for onward transmission to the nominated examiner, within three months of the date of the examination outcome letter.

b) The corrections and modifications must be made to the satisfaction of at least one examiner as agreed by the examiners following the *viva voce*. Examiners may not make additional requirements at this stage.

c) Upon receipt of the corrected thesis, the nominated examiner will, within one month of receipt, independently complete the Corrected Thesis Form and return it to the Research Degrees Team or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator for onward transmission to the Research Degrees Team, making one of the following recommendations:

   i) the student has completed the corrections and modifications, has met the academic requirements and should be awarded the degree for which they were examined

   ii) the student has failed to make the corrections and modifications and should be awarded a MPhil (subject to the provisions within PD 17.11e)

   iii) the student should be not awarded the degree and should not be permitted to be re-examined.

d) Where the recommendation is that the student be awarded the degree for which they were examined (PD 17.15ci) the Corrected Thesis Form will be forwarded to the Chair of the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee who may approve the award.

e) Where the recommendation is that the student has not completed the corrections and amendments to the required standards (PD 17.15cii or iii), the corrected thesis must be considered by the other examiner(s) on the panel who will independently complete a copy of the Corrected Thesis Form. All of the Corrected Thesis Forms will then be forwarded to the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee for consideration as follows:

   i) Where the examiners are not in agreement the regulations for non-unanimous decisions will be invoked (PD 17.28 – PD 17.29).

   ii) Where the examiners are in agreement the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee may:

   Ratify the recommendation of the examination panel. Where the Committee approves a recommendation that the student be awarded the degree, the Committee will formally approve the award at this stage.

f) Request further clarification from the examination panel regarding the recommended outcome.

g) Approve an alternative outcome – when in exceptional circumstances and following consultation with the examination panel where there continues to be a demonstrable inconsistency between the recommendation and other approved examination results.

Where the original outcome is ‘substantial amendments’:

a) Where the outcome is awarded is ‘subject to substantial amendments’ (PD 17.11c), the student must complete and submit the corrected thesis and an explanatory document demonstrating how they have met the requirements to the Research Degrees Team or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator, for onward transmission to the examiners, within six months of the date of the examination outcome letter.

b) The corrections must be made to the satisfaction of all examiners. Examiners may not impose additional requirements at this stage.

c) Upon receipt of the corrected thesis, the examiners will, within one month of receipt, independently complete the Corrected Thesis Form and return it to the Research Degrees Team recommending one of the following options:

    i) The student has completed the amendments, has met the academic requirements and should be awarded the degree for which they were examined.

    ii) The student has not satisfactorily completed the amendments, or has introduced additional material that requires amendment, and should be permitted a further three months to make minor corrections and amendments. In such cases regulations PD 17.15a – e will apply because the new outcome is recommended ‘Minor corrections and modifications’.

    iii) The student has failed to make the corrections and amendments and should be awarded a MPhil (subject to the provisions within PD 17.11e).

iv) The student should be not awarded the degree and should not be permitted to be re-examined.

d) Where the recommendation is that the student be awarded the degree for which they were examined (PD 17.15hi) the Corrected Thesis Form will be forwarded to the Chair of the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee who may approve the award.

e) Where the recommendation is that the student has not completed the corrections and amendments to the required standards (PD 17.15hii or iii), all of the Corrected Thesis Forms will be forwarded to the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee for consideration as follows:

i) Where the examiners are not in agreement the regulations for non-unanimous decisions will be invoked (PD 17.28 – PD 17.29).

ii) Where the examiners are in agreement the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee may:

1) Ratify the recommendation of the examination panel. Where the Committee approves a recommendation that the student be awarded the degree, the Committee will formally approve the award at this stage.

2) Request further clarification from the examination panel regarding the recommended outcome.

3) Approve an alternative outcome – when in exceptional circumstances and following consultation with the examination panel where there continues to be a demonstrable inconsistency between the recommendation and other approved examination results.

Where the original outcome is ‘re-submission and re-examination’:

PD 17.16 Where the examiners are not satisfied that the student has reached the standard required for the degree, they may recommend that the thesis is revised and resubmitted for examination. The student must re-submit the revised thesis to the Research Degrees Team, or to the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator in the case of a student registered through an Affiliated Research Centre, within 12 months of the date of the examination outcome letter.

PD 17.17 The revised thesis should be sent to the same examiners that participated in the original *viva voce*. In exceptional cases where an examiner is no longer available a new examiner will be appointed by the Progress Board in line with regulations PD 16.1 – PD 16. 6 and PD 16.10 – PD 16.16.

PD 17.18 The re-examination will follow the process set out in regulations PD 17.1 – PD 17.10.

PD 17.19 The examiners are required to make a judgement as to whether the candidate has, following revision and re-examination as specified by the examiners on the basis of the previous examination, met the criteria for the relevant degree.

PD 17.20 The following recommendations are available to the examination panel upon re-examination:

a) The student be awarded the degree.

b) The student be awarded the degree subject to minor corrections and modifications to the thesis (regulations PD 17.15a to e apply).

c) The student be awarded the degree subject to substantial amendments to the thesis (regulations PD 17.15f to j apply).

d) The student be awarded the degree of MPhil subject to the presentation of the thesis amended to the satisfaction of the examiners and which must meet the expectations for the award as set out in Appendix 1.

e) The student should be not awarded the degree and should not be permitted to be re-examined.

No further re-examination will be permitted.

Consideration of the outcome following the re-examination

PD 17.21 Within two working days of the re-examination, the examination panel Chair will provide the Research Degrees Team, or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator for onward transmission to the Research Degrees Team, with the completed Examination Report Form and the Pre-Viva Report Forms. These will be forwarded together with copies of the Examination Report Form and the Pre-Viva Report Forms from the original *viva voce* to the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee for consideration.

PD 17.22 Upon receipt of the Examination Report Form and the Pre-Viva Report Forms the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee may:

a) Ratify the recommendation of the examination panel. Where the Committee approves a recommendation that the student be awarded the degree, the Committee will formally approve the award at this stage.

b) Request further clarification from the examination panel regarding the recommended outcome.

c) Approve an alternative outcome – when in exceptional circumstances and following consultation with the examination panel where there continues to be a demonstrable inconsistency between the recommendation and other approved examination results.

PD 17.23 Upon receipt of the decision from the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee, the Research Degrees Team will send the examination outcome letter together with a copy of the Examination Report Form to the student, the supervisors and the Associate Dean Research or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator for onward transmission to the student and other relevant stakeholders, in the case of students registered through Affiliated Research Centres.

Where the student is awarded an MPhil following a Professional Doctorate examination:

PD 17.24 Where the examiners are not satisfied that the student has reached the standard required for a Doctoral degree, they may, either at the original *viva voce* or following re-examination, recommend that the student be awarded the degree of MPhil (PD 17.11e or PD 17.20d).

PD 17.25 Where this recommendation is made following the original *viva voce* examination it may be an outright award or may involve minor corrections and modifications (in which case regulation PD 17.15a to e apply), substantial amendments (in which case regulation PD 17.15f to j apply) or re-submission and re-examination for a MPhil degree (in which case regulations PD 17.16 to PD 17.20 apply).

PD 17.26 Where this recommendation is made following re-submission and re-examination it may be an outright award or may involve minor corrections and modifications (in which case regulation PD 17.15a to e apply) or substantial amendments (in which case regulation PD 17.15f to j apply). The option of re-submission and re-examination is not available at this stage.

Where there is no award and the student is not permitted to be re-examined:

PD 17.27 Where the examiners are not satisfied that the student has reached the standard required for the award of a degree and recommend that the student be not awarded the degree and not be permitted to be re-examined the Exam Panel Report Form must include details of:

a) Why the candidate failed to meet the requirements of the relevant degree.

b) Why the examination panel is unable to recommend major revision and resubmission of the thesis.

c) Why an MPhil cannot be recommended.

Where the Examiners are not in agreement – there is a non-unanimous decision:

PD 17.28 Where the recommendations are not unanimous immediately following the viva the Chair of the examination panel will seek a resolution during the post viva meeting. Where this is not possible or following a non-unanimous decision following the submission of a revised thesis, the Chair of the examination panel will schedule a new meeting of the examiners to seek a resolution. If after the meeting the recommendations are still not unanimous the Chair shall submit their report of the meeting(s), together with the examiners' separate reports and recommendations to the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee who may:

a) Accept a majority decision.

b) Accept the decision of the external examiner.

c) Request the Progress Board to appoint an additional external examiner.

PD 17.29 Where an additional external examiner is appointed, they shall not be informed of the recommendations of the other examiners. On receipt of the report from the additional external examiner the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee will reconsider the outcome and normally accept a majority decision.

Where the student fails to meet the deadlines for submission of amendments and/or revisions:

PD 17.30 Where following a *viva voce* examination, the student is unable to work, they may apply for a study break (PD 8.6).

PD 17.31 In the absence of an approved study break students are expected to meet the deadline for the submission of their revised thesis. The Research Degrees Team is not authorised to accept any thesis submitted after the deadline. In such circumstances the matter will be referred to the Progress Board together with any evidence of mitigating circumstances which led to the failure to meet the deadline. The Progress Board may or may not accept the late submission.

18. Post Award Requirements

PD 18.1 Following confirmation that the academic requirements for the award of the degree have been met students are required to submit a copy of their thesis and any associated documentation/materials to the university Library in accordance with the guidance within The Open University Thesis Submission Guidelines. Students are expected to complete this within one week of the award letter. A degree certificate will only be issued upon completion of this requirement.

Embargo or restricted access to a thesis

PD 18.2 The Open University has an open access policy on research outputs. It is therefore an expectation that a research degree thesis is made publicly available online through Open Research Online. Students are encouraged to make any research data publicly available online through the Open Research Data Online repository.

PD 18.3 Requests for embargo of a thesis should usually be made, and approved, at the point of application. Where it is necessary to apply for confidentiality of the thesis after registration, the application should be made to the Research Degrees Team for joint consideration by Progress Board, but it is not guaranteed that an application for an embargo will be approved. No retrospective requests will be approved once the student's thesis is available on Open Research Online.

PD 18.4 An application for confidentiality will normally only be approved in order to enable a patent application to be lodged or to protect commercially, nationally classified or politically sensitive material. A thesis shall not be restricted in this way in order to protect research leads. In consideration for theses containing a substantial amount of commercially publishable creative writing or artistic material, the student can redact sections of the thesis before making it freely available online but only if an intact and complete version of the thesis is still held by the university Library.

PD 18.5 Where an embargo is warranted and justified the normal maximum period of confidentiality is two years, in exceptional circumstances Progress Board may approve a longer period.

19. Appeals and Complaints

PD 19.1 A student may make a request for the academic body charged with making decisions on admission, assessment, student progression or award to review a decision. Students may make such an appeal against a decision providing that they meet the criteria outlined in the university's appeals process.

PD 19.2 A student may express their dissatisfaction concerning the provision of a programme of study or related academic or administrative service, which is not an appeal against a decision. Students may make such a complaint using the university's complaints process, or in the case of an Affiliated Research Centre student, the university's complaints process once the Affiliated Research Centre's complaints process has been exhausted.

PD 19.3 A student must not take their appeal or complaint outside of the university until all internal processes have been exhausted and have been deemed unable to resolve the complaint or appeal.

Research degree qualification regulations specifically for Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) by Published Work

1. Degree name and standards

PW 1.1 The Open University shall award the degrees of Doctor of Philosophy by Published Work (referred to as PhD) to registered candidates (including those registered through Affiliated Research Centres) whose published work is deemed by appropriate examiners to represent a coherent contribution to research in a given field at a level and scope equivalent to that of a PhD thesis. Holders of these qualifications are permitted, following award, to use the letters PhD after their names.

PW 1.2 A Doctor of Philosophy by Published Work may be awarded to a candidate who has demonstrated, through the presentation and defence of a portfolio of work, to the satisfaction of the examiners, that the expectations outlined in Appendix 1, 1.2 have been met.

2. Requirements for application

PW 2.1 An applicant seeking admission to the degree Doctor of Philosophy by Published Work should hold the minimum of an upper second-class honours degree, or a Master's degree in an appropriate cognate area from a UK university or other recognised degree-awarding body. The comparability of qualifications from outside the UK with The Open University requirements will be determined through reference to UK ENIC.

PW 2.2 Applicants holding qualifications other than those in PW 2.1 must demonstrate suitability for postgraduate level research based on professional experience, publications, written reports or other appropriate evidence of previous research, related to the proposed PhD by Published Works application shall be taken into consideration. In addition, applicants must provide the names of qualified persons from whom the university may seek references as to the applicants' academic attainment and potential for undertaking research at this level.
Applicants who do not hold any degree level qualifications will not be admitted and will not be eligible for consideration.

PW 2.3 In order to accept an application the Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre must confirm that the topic fits with current research priorities, and that arrangements have been made for the provision of an internal member of university staff with appropriate specialist knowledge to provide supervision. The approved fields of research are revised annually and can be found in the Research Degrees Prospectus. In the case of an Affiliated Research Centre candidate, the university Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre must confirm that arrangements have been made for the provision of an internal member of university staff with appropriate specialist knowledge to provide university oversight.

PW 2.4 The university can only accept applications for study from:

a) Members of The Open University's salaried staff of at least three years standing.

b) Open University Associate Lecturers of at least three years standing.

c) Members of salaried staff of at least three years standing in an Open University Accredited Institution.

d) Members of salaried staff of at least three years standing in an Open University Affiliated Research Centre which the Research Degrees Committee awarded a judgement of at least 'confidence' in all categories following the most recent Affiliated Research Centre review visit.

3. Admission

PW 3.1 All applicants must supply the following evidence in support of their application:

a) a completed application form

b) copies of their degree certificates

c) A list of the publications to be submitted for the degree, these may include refereed articles, authorised chapters, authorised books, and edited works in the Humanities. Articles, authorised chapters/books and edited works in the Humanities that are 'in press' are not admissible. Open University course units and readers or edited collections of the work of peers may not be submitted.

d) A draft of the covering paper (referred to in PW 10.2a) which should include:

i) A summary of each publication.

ii) An outline of the interrelationship between the publications.

iii) A critical review of the current state of knowledge and research in the field and indicate how the applicant's work has contributed to the field.

iv) Commentary on the reception of the publications, as indicated by citations and reviews, and the standing of the journals in which they were published.

v) A disclosure about the any use of Generative AI as part of the submission of the application, where such tools contributed to ideation, data analysis, or text generation that directly influenced the semantics of the research content. The disclosure should specify what type of AI was used, how it was used, and what role it played in the creation and preparation of the application.

e) the names and contact details of two independent referees

f) equal opportunities and Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) monitoring form.

g) In addition, and where applicable the following documentation must also be submitted:

h) transcripts of academic qualifications

i) certified translations of degree certificates and transcripts

j) copies of UK visas and biometric card

j) documentation supporting a change of name

PW 3.2 Prior to an offer of admission, applications will be screened by the Research Degrees Team to ensure that applicants have met the entrance requirements and, for relevant international students, satisfy the requirements of UK Visa and Immigration.

PW 3.3 Approval for admission is granted by the Progress Board following recommendation from the Faculty or ARC Management Group. In addition to the regulatory requirements any other terms and conditions of registration with the university will be provided in the offer letter.

PW 3.4 To be admitted as a research student of the university an applicant must:

a) comply with regulations as appropriate

b) register in accordance with the instructions contained within their offer letter

c) agree to comply with the Conditions of Registration for Postgraduate Research Students, the Research Code of Practice, the Research Degrees Regulations and all policies relevant to the student journey, and or any updates to these throughout the period of registration

d) pay or agree to pay the appropriate fees and charges

e) if a visa is required it must be appropriate and valid as per UKVI requirements.

4. Supervision

PW 4.1 Upon admission a student will be allocated with a university supervisor. The supervisor will be nominated by the Associate Dean Research in consultation with relevant stakeholders. In the case of students registered through the Affiliated Research Centres, the Affiliated Research Centre's Research Degrees Coordinator will nominate an additional supervisor who is internal to the Affiliated Research Centre with appropriate specialist knowledge to provide supervision. The Progress Board considers and approves the appointment of supervisors upon admission and when any further changes are required. Students are not permitted to select their own supervisory team.

PW 4.2 The supervisor(s) must meet the following criteria:

a) Hold an appointment as a member of academic staff, or a research fellow, at The Open University, or an Affiliated Research Centre, and be actively researching. For external supervisors at another university, they must hold an appointment as a member of academic staff and be actively researching as a member of a research group of appropriate academic standing.

b) Possess current academic expertise in the chosen discipline.

c) Be active researchers involved in research within their chosen discipline as evidenced through peer reviewed outputs.

d) Hold a doctoral award. The expectation is that supervisors will have a research degree (usually a PhD or Professional Doctorate) or for some disciplines, supervisors may have demonstrated significant engagement within their research or practice field in the absence of a research degree. Such variances require approval in advance by the Progress Board.

e) Have sufficient time to carry out their responsibilities in the provision of quality supervision and support for students.

f) Have read and confirmed their understanding of these regulations and of any updates.

g) The supervisory team collectively must have experience of supervising at least one UK PhD from the point of registration to successful completion and at least one member of the team must be an active researcher involved in research within their chosen discipline as evidenced through peer reviewed outputs.

PW 4.3 Supervisors should not be registered for a research degree themselves other than a Higher Doctorate, nor should they be in a close personal relationship with the student they are supervising. Supervisors should not normally be in a close personal relationship with any other member of the supervision team, nor should there be any other significant conflict of interest (see for Appendix 4 a non-exhaustive list). Where a potential conflict of interest exists or develops during the course of the student's research degree registration, the supervisor(s) must declare this, for consideration by the Progress Board.

PW 4.4 Research fellows (including post-doctoral researchers), emeritus professors and honorary associates of the Open University may be appointed as internal supervisors not as external supervisors)~~,~~ provided that the requirements of PW 4.2 are met. Associate Lecturers may be appointed as supervisors on a separate contract provided that they have a substantive academic position or are contracted to undertake research at the Open University or another organisation. Visiting academics may be appointed as external supervisors on a separate contract. Those appointed as supervisors for Affiliated Research Centre students must have a contract for supervision with the Affiliated Research Centre. With the exception of academic staff who can through their associate status demonstrate that they are contributing to research activities in the university or Affiliated Research Centre, retired members of staff are not eligible to join supervisory teams at the start of a new studentship but may continue to supervise to completion any students registered at the time of retirement providing the supervisory team as a whole is regulatory.

PW 4.5 Students are expected to have regular formal scheduled meetings with their internal supervisors. These formal meetings should normally be face to face (in person) and result in an agreed set of supervisory notes that record the discussion. Meetings should be held a minimum of five times per year. Informal meetings, without the need for an agreed set of notes, can be held as required.

Regardless, supervisors should keep sufficient notes to provide an accurate record of the student's journey. Meeting notes should be stored on the agreed management system.

PW 4.6 Where a supervisor is absent for a period of three months or more alternative supervisory arrangements must be put in place and approved by the Progress Board. Upon the return of a supervisor following such a period of extended leave discussions must take place with the Associate Dean Research, or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator, as appropriate, regarding the viability of them resuming the role. All changes to any supervisory team must be approved by the Progress Board. Whilst students may request a change to their supervisory team, this is not guaranteed and appointment of new supervisors cannot be initiated by the student.

PW 4.7 Faculties and Affiliated Research Centres are responsible for allocating sufficient time for a supervisor to carry out the duties required for quality supervision and support of students.

PW 4.8 Supervisors are required to undertake initial training within the first 12 months of beginning the role within the university or within the Affiliated Research Centre and then after every four years. This includes experienced supervisors who are new to the university or Affiliated Research Centre as well as supervisors who are new to the role. All supervisors are required to meet the expectations of the Research Degree Committee with regard to their continued professional development as outlined in Appendix 2.

PW 4.9 Students and supervisors are expected to abide by the Code of practice for supervisors and research students see Appendix 2 and the Supervision Policy.

5. Registration & Re-Registration

PW 5.1 Entry may be permitted for direct registration with The Open University at any point in the year.

Applicants registering through the Affiliated Research Centre programme may enter at points determined by their Affiliated Research Centre, within parameters approved by the university.

PW 5.2 In order to study for a degree, submit a portfolio of work for examination and be awarded the degree a candidate must be a registered research student of the university.

PW 5.3 The maximum period of registration is 12 months. There is no minimum registration period.

PW 5.4 Students who reach the maximum registration period without having submitted their portfolio of work will be deemed to have withdrawn from the research degree programme.

6. Study break

PW 6.1 A Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre may submit a request for study break to the Progress Board for consideration. Where possible such requests should be made in advance. A request can be initiated by the student or if the student is indisposed the supervisor(s) or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator must submit the request. Any request should be submitted together with the supporting evidence, if this is not available then the form should be submitted, and the supporting evidence should be forwarded to the Research Degrees Team as soon as possible thereafter. Study break requests should be submitted as soon as the event that requires a study break occurs. A student is not permitted to engage in any aspect of their studies whilst on an approved study break. A study break is not an automatic right and requests for retrospective study breaks, will not be considered.

PW 6.2 Study breaks do not count towards the maximum permitted period of study (see PW 5.3).

PW 6.3 Study breaks will only be approved by the Progress Board in periods of one or more months.

PW 6.4 Students may request a study break, for a maximum of 12 months in total on the grounds of certified serious ill health of the student or a family member or dependent for whom the student is acting as a carer. Accrued study breaks can be used as a reasonable adjustment where the student

has a registered disability or long-term health condition with the university or is a registered carer. Such requests should be submitted upon accrual of one month of disrupted time.

PW 6.5 Following the submission of the thesis, students may only request a study break on the grounds of exceptional circumstances. Requests will to be considered by the Progress Board.

PW 6.6 Students may be granted a period of maternity, paternity, adoption or shared leave up to a maximum of 12 months and this will not count toward the maximum period of study, nor the maximum permitted period for a study break. Maternity, paternity, adoption and shared leave entitlements for students registered through Affiliated Research Centres are determined by the Affiliated Research Centre, up to the maximum period permitted by the university.

PW 6.7 Upon return from a study break or maternity, paternity, adoption or shared leave the students and supervisors should have a return to study meeting.

7. Extension of registration

PW 7.1 Students approaching their maximum registration may in exceptional circumstances apply to the Progress Board for an extension to their registration of up to a maximum of 12 months in total. Requests must be submitted no later than one month prior to the maximum registration date and should be accompanied by supporting evidence and an agreed plan of work for completion. Requests submitted after the maximum registration date will not be considered as the student will have been deemed to have withdrawn from the research degree programme (PW 5.4).

PW 7.2 Extensions to registration are not permitted post submission of the portfolio of work.

8. Withdrawal

PW 8.1 When a student decides to terminate their registration with The Open University, the Faculty or Affiliated Research Centre must inform the Research Degrees Team using the relevant form and the Progress Board will note the decision. A decision to withdraw is absolute and cannot be reversed.

9. De-registration

PW 9.1 A student may be de-registered by the university on the following grounds:

a) Failure to meet their fee liability

b) Failure to comply with the Code of Practice for Student Discipline

c) Failure to comply with the Conditions of Registration for Postgraduate Research Students and these regulations which includes these regulations and the policies referred to therein.

d) Where an investigation under the PGR Plagiarism and Research Misconduct Policy establishes serious failure to comply with the Research Code of Practice

e) Following recommendation from a fitness to study panel that registration is terminated

PW 9.2 Recommendations to de-register a student on the basis of PW 9.1 will be considered by the Progress Board who, having considered all of the evidence, both academic and procedural, may:

a) Approve the recommendation

b) Propose that the Faculty, or Affiliated Research Centre put together a plan to support the student within a limited time frame. At the end of this time period the recommendation for de-registration will be reviewed.

PW 9.3 A student who is de-registered has the right to appeal against the decision (see PW 15.1).

10. Research Integrity and Ethics

PW 10.1 All research degree studies must be conducted in line with the expectations of The Open University's Research Code of Practice.

PW 10.2 Any activity that falls short of the expectations outlined in The Open University's Research Code of Practice. will be dealt with via the Postgraduate Research Student Plagiarism and Research Misconduct Policy.

11. Submission of portfolio of work

PW 11.1 Students must give three months' notice, in writing, to the Research Degrees Team or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator, of their intention to submit a portfolio of work for the award of a research degree. Notification should include confirmation of the portfolio of work title and a provisional date for submission.

PW 11.2 Within the maximum periods of study for the degree (PW 5.3), students are required to submit, together with any supporting material, to the Research Degrees Team or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator, the following for examination:

a) One electronic copy of the covering paper which should include:

i) A title page, including name and qualifications, title of doctoral submission, degree aim, academic discipline, date of submission and a contents page.

ii) A summary of each publication.

iii) An outline of the interrelationship between the publications.

iv) A critical review of the current state of knowledge and research in the field and an indication as to how the students work has contributed to the field.

v) Commentary on the reception of the publications, as indicated by citations and reviews, and the standing of the journals in which they were published.

b) Four hard copies and one electronic copy of each publication in its published form. Inclusion of work in the manuscript which has been accepted for publication is normally permitted.

c) An abstract.

d) A plain language summary

e) A CRediT Taxonomy (a standardised system for describing author contributions to a research article)

f) A completed Candidate Declaration Form indicating:

i) Whether any material has previously been submitted for an award to this or any other university or institution.

ii) Where collaborative work is submitted, the extent to which it represents the student's independent contribution, normally presented at the start of each chapter or as a section in the introductory chapter.

iii) Disclosure about the use of Generative AI; where such tools contributed to ideation, data analysis, or text generation that directly influenced the semantics of the research content. The disclosure should specify what type of AI was used, how it was used, and what role it played in the creation and preparation of the portfolio submission.

The portfolio of work must comply with regulations PW 11.3 and PW 11.4 and must conform to the standards outlined in The Open University thesis submission guidelines. Please note that Research Degrees Team are not able to accept any theses submitted after the maximum registration date.

PW 11.3 The portfolio of work must meet the standards for the degree outlined in Appendix 1.

PW 11.4 The portfolio of work must be written in English unless the student is in receipt of prior permission, under the terms of their letter of registration as a student of the university, to submit the work in Welsh or Gaelic. Brief quotations in foreign languages are permitted; these should not normally exceed 150 words.

PW 11.5 The decision to submit a thesis rests with the candidate alone. Although a candidate would normally be unwise to submit the thesis for examination against the advice of the supervisor(s), it is the candidate's right to do so. Equally, a candidate must not assume that submission with supervisory agreement guarantees a successful outcome of the examination. Further:

a) If the supervisor(s) has any comments/concerns about the candidate's intention to submit, these should be noted on the Candidate Declaration Form.

b) Where the supervisor(s) report that they do not support the thesis submission on the basis that they do not consider that it meets the required standards for examination they must write a report to Progress Board describing where the thesis falls short. The report should be copied to the Associate Dean Research or Affiliated Research Centre Co-ordinator and to the candidate.

c) Candidates who submit their thesis against supervisor(s) advice do so at their own risk and will be asked to sign a statement acknowledging:

i) That in submitting their thesis against supervisor(s) advice do so at their own risk;

ii) That any complaints about supervision or disagreements with supervisor(s) over thesis submission do not constitute grounds for appealing against an examination decision;

iii) That there is no guarantee of a change of supervision, should the examination outcome require revisions.

12. Appointment of the examination panel

PW 12.1 A portfolio of work submitted for the award of a research degree will be submitted to an examination panel approved by Progress Board.

PW 12.2 Recommendations for the constitution of an examination panel must be made a minimum of 3 months ahead of submission of the portfolio of work, in tandem with the student's intention to submit (PW 11.1) and no later than three months before the maximum registration date. Recommendations are made to Progress Board by the relevant Associate Dean Research, or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator, in consultation with the supervisor(s).

PW 12.3 The constitution of an examination panel must include an examination panel Chair, an internal examiner and two external examiners.

PW 12.4 Those nominated for appointment as members of an examination panel should be independent and should not have had any influence on the design or implementation of the student's research portfolio. Any potential conflicts of interest (see Appendix 4 for a non-exhaustive list) should be declared at the point of nomination.

PW 12.5 Notwithstanding PW 12.4 Progress Board may on receipt of a detailed explanatory statement from the Associate Dean Research or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator, deem that the conflict of interest does not constitute a barrier to the integrity of the examination process. Such decisions must be fully evidenced and documented.

PW 12.6 Examination panels are appointed for the duration of the examination process, unless exceptional circumstances arise.

Examination Panel Chair

PW 12.7 The appointment of an independent examination panel Chair (see Appendix 4) should be made against the following criteria:

a) Experience of UK research degree examination as an examiner and normally of research degree supervision.

b) Currently a member of academic or research staff at The Open University or

c) Affiliated Research Centre of Lecturer or Research Associate status or above

d) Familiarity with the research degree regulations and the QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications for the award of research degrees Appendix 1.

e) Has received or will be in receipt of prior to the *viva voce* examination, training in the roles and responsibilities of the Chair.

f) Training must not take the form of shadowing a nominated Chair during a student's viva voce exam.

A Chair should not be currently registered for a research degree at this or any other institution with the exception of registration for a Higher Doctorate.

PW 12.8 Visiting professors/academics, research fellows (including post-doctoral researchers), emeritus professors and honorary associates of the university may be appointed as a Chair provided that they meet the criteria set out in PW 12.7.

PW 12.9 The role of the examination panel Chair is neutral in the assessment process and should take no part in the actual assessment of the portfolio of work including questioning the candidate during the viva, or bear any influence on the time available for the examiners to conduct their examination. It is the role of the examination panel Chair:

a) To oversee, and to inform the Research Degrees Team of, the arrangements for the examination.

b) To ensure that the examiners prepare independent Pre-Viva Report Forms (PW 13.4) in a timely manner.

c) To identify with the examiners the main points to be raised at the examination.

d) To confirm with the examiners and the observer the role of the observer at the examination and in the examiners' meetings if invited to attend to answer a specific question.

e) In cases where the submitted portfolio of work contains non-text outputs, to take account of the specific requirements and ensure that all members of the panel, the student and the observer are fully briefed as to how the examination will proceed.

f) To chair the examination and the examiners' pre- and post-examination meetings;

g) To ensure that the examination is conducted according to the university's regulations and procedures and that the examiners are able to complete their oral examination to their satisfaction.

h) To ensure that the Examination Report Form is completed diligently and agreed by all the examiners at the end of the examination. This should include a report on the examination and a recommendation on the award of the degree. If amendments are required, they should be specified in the relevant section of the Examination Report Form. Attachments can be added if necessary. Typographical errors may be annotated on an electronic copy of the thesis and submitted with the Examination Report Form. Corrections above the level of typographical errors must be explicitly stated in the Examination Report Form and if typographical corrections are deemed essential to the award of the degree, as opposed to suggested only, they must also be explicitly stated in the Examination Report Form.

i) To ensure that any amendments specified in the Examination Report Form match the criteria / examples associated with the appropriate recommended outcome in regulation PW 13.11.

j) To send by email the completed Examination Report Form, and the examiners' independent Pre-Viva Report Forms to the Research Degrees Team or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator for onward transmission to the Research Degrees Team, within two working days of the *viva voce*.

k) To clarify to participants in the examination that recommended outcome is preliminary and subject to approval by the Research Degree Examination Results Approval Committee, and to ensure that in the light of this the feedback given to the student is appropriate.

Examiners

PW 12.10 The appointment of examiners should be made against the following criteria:

a) Be qualified and have current experience and expertise in the field of the portfolio of work to be examined.

b) Have experience of UK research degree supervision to successful completion and/or examination.

c) Collectively have experience of examining a minimum of five UK Doctoral degrees.

An examiner should not be currently registered for a research degree, other than a Higher Doctorate, at this or any other institution.

PW 12.11 Internal examiners should be members of academic staff at The Open University or Affiliated Research Centre of Lecturer status or above. Visiting professors/academics, external supervisors, research fellows (including post-doctoral researchers), emeritus professors and honorary associates of the university or Affiliated Research Centre may be appointed as internal examiners provided that they meet the criteria set out in PW 12.10.

Associate Lecturers who also hold an academic position and are actively engaged in research at the Open University or elsewhere, as evidenced by their CV, may be appointed as internal examiners.

PW 12.12 External examiners should normally be members of academic staff at a university or research institution, at Lecturer status or above.

PW 12.13 Former members of The Open University Staff or an Affiliated Research Centre may not be appointed as an external examiner unless they left the university or Affiliated Research Centre at least three years previously.

PW 12.14 Associated Lecturers, retired, or emeritus staff of The Open University or an Affiliated Research Centre may not be appointed as external examiners.

PW 12.15 It is the role of the examiners to:

a) Abide by the university's contractual confidentiality statement:

   i) As set out in the External Examiner Acceptance form

   ii) As set out in Appendix 5.

b) Prepare an independent Pre-Viva Report Form (see PW 13.4).

c) Identify the main points to be raised at the examination.

d) Assess with the other examiner(s) whether the student has met the requirements of the relevant degree.

e) Make a recommendation with the other examiner(s) on the award of the degree and any revisions required.

f) Check revisions to the portfolio of work following the viva voce examination as specified in PW 13.11.

g) Abide by the university's contractual confidentiality statement (Appendix 5).

PW 12.16 Once the panel is appointed all communication with the examiners on matters related to the portfolio of work and or/the examination until such a time as there is a final outcome must be carried out through the panel Chair, the Research Degrees Team, the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator, the Chair of Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee or the Progress Board. The supervisors and student must only communicate via the examination panel Chair if they need to seek clarification on any matter, before or after examination.

Observers

PW 12.17 The student's supervisor (or other member of the school approved by the Associate Dean Research or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator) may, at the request of the student, be present at the examination in the role of observer. The request must be confirmed in writing to the Research Degrees Team.

PW 12.18 The role of the observer is to attend the *viva voce* and to:

a) Provide the candidate with a reassuring.

b) Provide post-viva support to the student in the interpretation of the examination panel's requests for any amendments to the portfolio of work.

c) The observer must play no part in the viva, nor interact with the student or the examiners during the viva, except where there are concerns over the welfare of the student.

PW 12.19 In addition the observer may, at the request of the examiners, provide an explanation to the examination panel at either the pre- or post-viva examination meeting on an aspect of the student's research, e.g., relating to problems with access to data. The participation of an observer in these meetings should be limited to answering specific requests for information from the examiners.

PW 12.20 It is not permissible for any other additional persons to be present at the examination, subject to the provisions of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001.

13. Examination

PW 13.1 The examination of a PhD by published work will have the following stages:

a) Preliminary assessment of the cover paper and the publications, the portfolio of work, by the examiners.

b) The defence of the portfolio of work during an oral examination.

c) The assessment and re-examination of any revisions, as appropriate.

PW 13.2 Upon receipt of the portfolio of work and associated documentation (PW 11.2), and providing that the examination panel has been approved (PW 12.1), the Research Degrees Team or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator where the student is registered through an Affiliated Research Centre, is solely responsible for confirming receipt to the Chair and sending copies to the panel together with a copy of Part 1 of the Candidate Declaration Form.

PW 13.3 Upon receipt of the portfolio of work, the examination panel Chair should contact the examiners, the student and the observer to make arrangements for the *viva voce* examination.

Independent Report Forms

PW 13.4 Each examiner is required to read the portfolio of work and consider whether it satisfies the requirements for the degree as outlined in Appendix 1. Each examiner should then complete and submit, in confidence and independently of all other parties, the Pre-Viva Report Form to the examination panel Chair a minimum of five working days before the examination. The forms should be forwarded in confidence to the Research Degrees Team, or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator where the student is registered through an Affiliated Research Centre, by the examination panel Chair upon receipt.

PW 13.5 Upon receipt of the Pre-Viva Report Forms from all of the examiners, the examination panel Chair may share them in confidence across the examination panel. They should not be shared with the student, their supervisors or the observer at this stage. Any breach of the confidentiality of the forms and recommendations therein may invalidate the examination.

Participation

PW 13.6 All examiners must participate in the oral examination. It is recommended that the *viva voce* examination will take place face to face with all of the participants in the same location, however further to the provisions outlined below the viva voce examination may, at the student's or examiners' request, take place in a hybrid fashion (some participants online) or fully online (every participant engages online from separate locations).

a) The student must give signed consent to being examined by a panel where the external examiner(s) is/are participating by video conference or where each participant is engaging remotely;

b) There is reliable and effective technology, in most cases this will be video conferencing facilities, at The Open University campus or the Affiliated Research Centre or other location where the participants are located, and that this is used as the means of conducting the examination remotely.

c) The Open University Faculty or the Affiliated Research Centre will accept responsibility for the technical arrangements for the *viva voce* examination.

d) Contingency arrangements will be made should the technology fail on the day. The backup should be of a comparable standard (e.g., Skype or telephone conferencing). Please note however that video conference is the requisite means of conducting a *viva voce* examination with a remote participant.
Where a contingency is put into place the arrangement must be discussed and agreed with the student.

e) wherever the *viva voce* takes place, the supervisory team must ensure that the student has appropriate support before and after the examination, and written evidence of this will be provided to the Examination Panel Chair.

PW 13.7 The student must attend and participate in the entire viva voce examination and failure to do so will lead to an outcome of 'fail' with no automatic right to a second viva voce examination. Reasonable adjustments for the viva should be requested in the 'Notice to Submit'. This does not preclude requests for unforeseen or exceptional circumstances which the Graduate School should be notified of as soon as possible following the change of circumstances. If reasonable adjustments are required for the viva these must be requested a minimum of two weeks prior to the viva date.

Viva voce examination

PW 13.8 The examination panel should meet prior to the examination to:

a) Consider the preliminary reports and the portfolio of work.

b) Confirm the structure of the questioning and the main points to be raised at the examination.

c) Identify any issues that require additional information from the observer. The observer should not be present at this meeting unless PW 19.c applies.

PW 13.9 The examination should cover all aspects of the portfolio of work and confirm that the portfolio of work is the student's own original work.

PW 13.10 Following the examination the examination panel should meet in the absence of the student and the observer to discuss the recommended outcome and complete the Examination Report Form.

Outcomes

PW 13.11 The following recommendations are available to the examination panel:

a) The student be awarded the degree.

b) The student be awarded the degree subject to specified revisions to the covering paper.

c) The student be not awarded the degree.

Where the panel cannot provide a unanimous recommendation, please invoke regulations PW 13.17 – PW 13.18.

Where the portfolio of work has been found unacceptable for the award of the degree, a student may make a new application for registration. This will require a substantially new submission.

Consideration of the outcome following the *viva voce*

PW 13.12 Within two working days of the *viva voce* examination, the examination panel Chair must submit the completed Examination Report Form and the Pre-Viva Report Forms to the Research Degrees Team or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator for onward transmission to the Research Degrees Team, with the completed Examination Report Form and the *Pre-Viva Report Forms*. These will be forwarded to the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee for consideration as outlined in Appendix 6.

PW 13.13 Normally within 5 working days of receipt of the Examination Report Form and the Pre-Viva Report Forms the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee may:

a) Ratify the recommendation of the examination panel. Where the Committee approves a recommendation that the student be awarded the degree, the Committee will formally approve the award at this stage.

b) Request further clarification from the examination panel regarding the recommended outcome.

c) Approve an alternative outcome – when in exceptional circumstances and following consultation with the examination panel, where there continues to be a demonstrable inconsistency between the recommendation of the exam and other approved examination results.

PW 13.14 Upon receipt of the decision from the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee, the Research Degrees Team will send the examination outcome letter together with a copy of the Examination Report Form to the student, the supervisors and the Associate Dean Research, or for those students registered through Affiliated Research Centres, the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator for onward transmission to other relevant stakeholders.

Revisions

PW 13.15 Where the examiners are satisfied that the student has reached the standard required for the degree but consider that the candidate's submission requires revision, they may recommend that the degree be awarded subject to the candidate amending the covering paper (PW 13.11b). In such circumstances the following will apply:

a) Where the outcome is 'award subject to specified revisions of the covering paper' (PW 13.11b) the student must complete and submit the revised portfolio of work and a document that explains how they have met the requirements to the Research Degrees Team or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator, for onward transmission to the nominated examiner, within three months of the date of the examination outcome letter.

b) The revisions must be made to the satisfaction of at least one examiner as agreed by the examiners following the *viva voce*. Examiners may not make additional requirements at this stage.

c) Upon receipt of the revised covering paper, the nominated examiner will, within one month of receipt, complete the Corrected Portfolio of Work Form and return it to the Research Degrees Team, or to the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator for onward transmission to the Research Degrees Team, making one of the following recommendations:

i) The student has completed the ‘specified revisions’, has met the academic requirements and should be awarded the degree.

ii) The student has not completed the ‘specified revisions’ and should be not awarded the degree.

d) Where the recommendation is that the student be awarded the degree for which they were examined (PW 13.15ci) the Corrected Portfolio of Work Form will be forwarded to the Chair of the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee who may approve the award.

e) Where the recommendation is that the student has not completed the ‘specified revisions’ to the required standards (PW 13.12cii), the revised covering paper must be considered by the other examiners on the panel who will independently complete a copy of the Corrected Portfolio of Work Form. All of the Corrected Portfolio of Work Forms will then be forwarded to the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee for consideration as follows:

i) Where the examiners are not in agreement the regulations for non-unanimous decisions will be invoked (PW 13.17 – PW 13.18).

ii) Where the examiners are in agreement the Research Degrees.

Examination Results Approval Committee may:

a) Ratify the recommendation of the examination panel. Where the Committee approves a recommendation that the student be awarded the degree, the Committee will formally approve the award at this stage.

b) Request further clarification from the examination panel regarding the recommended outcome.

c) Approve an alternative outcome – when in exceptional circumstances and following consultation with the examination panel where there continues to be a demonstrable inconsistency between the recommendation and other approved examination results.

No award

PW 13.16 Where the examiners are not satisfied that the student has reached the standard required for the award of a degree and recommend that the student be not awarded the degree the Examination Report Form must include details of why the student failed to meet the requirements for the award of a PhD.

Where the Examiners are not in agreement – there is a non-unanimous decision:

PW 13.17 Where the recommendations are not unanimous immediately following the viva the Chair of the examination panel will seek a resolution during the post viva meeting. Where this is not possible or following a non-unanimous decision following the submission of a revised thesis, the Chair of the examination panel will schedule a new meeting of the examiners to seek a resolution. If after the meeting the recommendations are still not unanimous, the Chair shall submit their report of the meeting(s), together with the examiners' separate reports and recommendations to the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee who may:

a) Accept a majority decision.

b) Accept the decision of the external examiners if they are in agreement.

c) Request Progress Board appoint an additional external examiner.

PW 13.18 Where an additional external examiner is appointed, they shall not be informed of the recommendations of the other examiners. On receipt of the report from the additional external examiner the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee will reconsider the outcome and normally accept a majority decision.

Where the student fails to meet the deadlines for submission of amendments and/or revisions:

PW 13.19 Where following a *viva voce* examination, the student is unable to work, they may apply for a study break (see PW 6.5).

PW 13.20 In the absence of an approved study break students are expected to meet the deadline for the submission of their revised portfolio of work. The Research Degrees Team is not authorised to accept any portfolio of work submitted after the deadline. In such circumstances the matter will be referred to Progress Board together with any evidence of mitigating circumstances that led to the failure to meet the deadline. The Progress Board may or may not accept the late submission.

14. Post award requirements

PW 14.1 Following confirmation that the academic requirements for the award of the degree have been met students are required to submit a copy of their submission and any associated documentation/materials to the university Library in accordance with the guidance within The Open University thesis submission guidelines. Students are expected to complete this within one week of the award letter. A degree certificate will only be issued upon completion of this requirement.

15. Appeals and complaints

PW 15.1 A student may make a request for the academic body charged with making decisions on admission, assessment, student progression or award to review a decision. Students may make such an appeal against a decision providing that they meet the criteria outlined in the university's appeals process.

PW 15.2 A student may express their dissatisfaction concerning the provision of a programme of study or related academic or administrative service, which is not an appeal against a decision. Students may make such a complaint using the university's complaints process, or in the case of an Affiliated Research Centre student, the university's complaints process once the Affiliated Research Centre's complaints process has been exhausted.

PW 15.3 A student must not take their appeal or complaint outside of the university until all internal processes have been exhausted and have been deemed unable to resolve the complaint or appeal.

Regulations specifically for Higher Doctorate awards

1. Degree name and standards

HD 1.1 The following Higher Doctorates are conferred by the university: Doctor of Letters (referred to as DLitt); Doctor of Science (referred to as DSc). Holders of these qualifications are permitted, following award, to use the letters DLitt or DSc as appropriate after their names.

HD 1.2 Higher Doctorates are conferred by The Open University in recognition is a substantial body of original research, at a higher level than a PhD, undertaken over the course of many years. This is demonstrated through the submission for assessment of a portfolio of work, that has previously been published in a peer review context, and which establishes the candidate's authoritative standing in their discipline (see HD 3.1).

2. Requirements for application and registration

HD 2.1 An applicant seeking registration for a Higher Doctorate must be:

a) a graduate of The Open University, or

b) a graduate holding a degree validated by The Open University who are not otherwise eligible for registration with a degree-awarding institution, or

c) a member of the salaried staff of The Open University of at least three years standing, or

d) an Open University Associate Lecturer of at least three years standing, or

e) a member of salaried staff of at least three years standing in an Open University Accredited Institution who are not otherwise eligible for registration with a degree-awarding institution, or

f) a member of salaried staff of at least three years standing in an Open University Affiliated Research Centre which the Research Degrees Committee awarded a judgement of at least ‘confidence’ in all categories following the most recent Affiliated Research Centre review visit.

HD 2.2 Where an applicant does not satisfy regulation HD 2.1, they may be considered for registration provided that they fulfil the following criteria:

a) They are formally ineligible to apply to another university as a staff member or graduate of that university.

b) Their published work has been significantly associated with The Open University.

c) Their qualifications are deemed acceptable by the Senate.

HD 2.3 An applicant for a Higher Doctorate is required to demonstrate that:

a) Their field of study is within the subject areas listed in the Research Degrees Prospectus in which the university has appropriate expertise.

b) They have made an original and substantial contribution to a major field of study over a significant period of time.

c) They are a leading authority in their field.

d) They have been involved in major innovations and new developments in their field.

HD 2.4 An applicant must submit a *prima facie* case for registration to the Graduate School. This must include:

a) A statement regarding the nature and extent of their contribution to their field of study.

b) A list of publications to be submitted for the degree, these may include refereed articles, authorised chapters, authorised books, and edited works in the Humanities.

c) An outline draft of the supporting paper.

d) A disclosure about the any use of Generative AI as part of the submission of the supporting paper, where such tools contributed to ideation, data analysis, or text generation that directly influenced the semantics of the research content. The disclosure should specify what type of AI was used, how it was used, and what role it played in the creation and preparation of the supporting paper.

Where evidence in support of the above has been submitted for any other academic award, this must be made clear at this stage.

HD 2.5 Before registration for a Higher Doctorate can be approved an appropriate member of the university's academic staff, nominated by the relevant Associate Dean Research and approved by the Senate, must recommend that there is a *prima facie* case for the award.

HD 2.6 Following registration a candidate must submit their portfolio of work for examination within 12 months. There is no minimum registration period.

HD 2.7 In order to study for, submit a portfolio of work and be awarded the degree a candidate must be a registered Higher Doctorate candidate of the university.

HD 2.8 Candidates who reach the maximum registration period without having submitted their portfolio of work will be deemed to have withdrawn from the research degree programme.

3. Criteria for the Degree

HD 3.1 A Higher Doctorate will be awarded in respect of published work that:

a) Represents an original and substantial contribution to a major field of study over a significant period of time.

b) Demonstrates that the candidate is a leading authority in their field and that they have been involved in major innovations or new developments in that field.

4. Study break

HD 4.1 The candidate may submit a request for a study break to Progress Board for consideration. Any request should be submitted together with the supporting evidence, if this is not available then the form should be submitted, and the supporting evidence should be forwarded to the Research Degrees Team as soon as possible thereafter. Study break requests should be submitted as soon as the event that requires a study break occurs. A study break is not an automatic right and requests for retrospective study breaks, will not be considered.

HD 4.2 Study breaks do not count towards the maximum permitted period of study (see HD 2.6).

HD 4.3 Study breaks will normally only be approved by the Progress Board in periods of one or more months.

HD 4.4 Candidates may request a study break for a maximum of 12 months in total on the grounds of certified serious ill health of the candidate or a family member or dependent for whom the candidate is acting as a carer.

HD 4.5 Following submission of the portfolio of work, students may only request a study break on the grounds of exceptional circumstances. Requests will to be considered by the Progress Board.

HD 4.6 Candidates may be granted a period of maternity, paternity, adoption or shared leave up to a maximum of 12 months and this will not count toward the maximum period of study, nor the maximum permitted period for a study break. Maternity, paternity, adoption and shared leave entitlements for students registered through Affiliated Research Centres are determined by the Affiliated Research Centre, up to the maximum period permitted by the university.

5. Extension of registration

HD 5.1 Candidates approaching their maximum registration may, in exceptional circumstances, apply to the Progress Board for an extension to their registration of up to a maximum of 12 months in total. Requests must be submitted no later than one month prior to the maximum registration date and should be accompanied by supporting evidence and an agreed plan of work for completion. Requests submitted after the maximum registration date will not be considered as the student will have been deemed to have withdrawn from the research degree programme (HD 2.8).

HD 5.2 Extensions to registration are not permitted post submission of the portfolio of work.

6. Withdrawal

HD 6.1 When a candidate decides to withdraw from their registration with The Open University, the candidate must inform the Research Degrees Team using the relevant form and the Progress Board will note the decision. A decision to withdraw is absolute and cannot be reversed.

7. De-registration

HD 7.1 A candidate may be de-registered by the university on the following grounds:

a) Failure to meet their fee liability

b) Failure to comply with the Code of practice for student discipline

c) Failure to comply with the Conditions of Registration for Postgraduate Research Students and these regulations which includes these regulations and the policies referred to therein

d) Where an investigation under the PGR Plagiarism and Research Misconduct Policy establishes serious failure to comply with the Research Code of Practice

e) Following recommendation from a fitness to study panel that registration is terminated.

HD 7.2 Recommendations to de-register a student on the basis of HD 7.1 will be considered by the Progress Board who, having considered all of the evidence, both academic and procedural, may:

a) Approve the recommendation

b) Propose that the Faculty, or Affiliated Research Centre, put together a plan to support the student within a limited time frame. At the end of this time period the recommendation for de-registration will be reviewed.

HD 7.3 A student who is de-registered has the right to appeal against the decision (see HD 13.1).

8. Research Integrity

HD 8.1 All research degree studies must be conducted in line with the expectations of The Open University's Research Code of Practice.

HD 8.2 Any activity that falls short of the expectations outlined in The Open University's Research Code of Practice. will be dealt with via the Procedure for dealing with allegations of research malpractice or misconduct.

9. Submission of portfolio of work

HD 9.1 Candidates must give three months' notice, in writing, to the Research Degrees Team, of their intention to submit a portfolio of work for the award of a Higher Doctorate. Notification should include confirmation of the title of the Higher Doctorate submission and a provisional date for submission. Please note that Research Degrees Team are not able to accept any theses submitted after the maximum registration date.

HD 9.2 Within the maximum periods of study for the degree (HD 2.6), candidates are required to submit together with any supporting material to the Research Degrees Team, the following for examination:

a) One electronic copy, in published form, of each item forming part of the work on which the submission for a Higher Doctorate is based. Inclusion of work in the manuscript which has been accepted for publication is normally permitted.

b) A plain language summary

c) a CRediT Taxonomy (a standardised system for describing author contributions to a research article)

d) Four hard copies and one electronic copy of a covering paper which should include:

   i) A title page, including name and qualifications, title of Higher Doctorate submission, degree aim, academic discipline(s), date of submission and a contents page.

   ii) A summary of each publication.

   iii) An outline of the interrelationship between the publications.

   iv) A critical review of the current state of knowledge and research in the field and indication as to how the candidates work has contributed to the field.

v) Commentary on the reception of the publications, as indicated by citations and reviews, and the standing of the journals in which they were published.

e) A completed Candidate Declaration Form indicating:

i) Whether any material has previously been submitted for an award to this or any other university or institution.

ii) Where collaborative work is submitted, the extent to which it represents the candidate's independent contribution, normally presented at the start of each chapter or as a section in the introductory chapter.

iii) disclosure about the use of Generative AI; where such tools contributed to ideation, data analysis, or text generation that directly influenced the semantics of the research content. The disclosure should specify what type of AI was used, how it was used, and what role it played in the creation and preparation of the portfolio submission.

The portfolio of work must comply with regulation HD 9.3 and must conform to the standards outlined in The Open University thesis submission guidelines.

HD 9.3 The portfolio of work must be written in English unless the candidate is in receipt of prior permission, under the terms of their letter of registration as a candidate of the university, to submit the work in Welsh or Gaelic. Brief quotations in foreign languages are permitted; these should not normally exceed 150 words.

10. Appointment of the examination panel

HD 10.1 A portfolio of work submitted for the award of a Higher Doctorate will be submitted to an examination panel approved by Progress Board.

HD 10.2 Recommendations for the constitution of an examination panel must be made a minimum of 3 months ahead of submission of the portfolio of

work, in tandem with the student's intention to submit (HD 9.1) and no later than three months before the maximum registration date. Recommendations are made to Progress Board by the Associate Dean Research or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator in consultation with the supervisors.

HD 10.3 The exam panel, nominated by the relevant Associate Dean Research, shall comprise an examination panel Chair and one internal examiner, both should be members of The Open University's academic staff, and two external examiners, who will be members of academic staff at another university or research institution. Where a suitable internal examiner cannot be identified the exam panel shall comprise three external examiners.

HD 10.4 Those nominated for appointment as members of an examination panel should be independent and should not have had any influence on the design or implementation of the candidate's research portfolio. Members of the panel should be entirely independent of the candidate and each other. Any potential conflicts of interest (see Appendix 4 for a non-exhaustive list) should be declared at the point of nomination.

HD 10.5 Notwithstanding HD 10.4 Progress Board may on receipt of a detailed explanatory statement from the Associate Dean Research, deem that the conflict of interest does not constitute a barrier to the integrity of the examination process. Such decisions must be fully evidenced and documented.

HD 10.6 Examination panels are appointed for the duration of the examination process, unless exceptional circumstances arise.

Examination Panel Chair

HD 10.7 The appointment of an independent examination panel Chair (see Appendix 4) should be made against the following criteria:

a) Experience of UK research degree examination as an examiner and normally of research degree supervision to successful completion.

b) Currently a member of academic or research staff at The Open University or

c) Affiliated Research Centre of Lecturer or Research Associate status or above.

d) Training must not take the form of shadowing a nominated Chair during a student's *viva voce* exam.

e) Familiarity with the Higher Doctorate regulations and the QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications for the award of research degrees Appendix 1.

f) Has received, or will be in receipt of prior to the *viva voce* examination, training in the roles and responsibilities of the Chair.

A Chair should not be currently registered for a research degree or a Higher Doctorate at this or any other institution.

HD 10.8 Visiting professors/academics, external supervisors who are holders of a contract with The Open University or an Affiliated Research Centre to act as an external supervisor for students other than the examinee, research fellows (including post-doctoral researchers), emeritus professors and honorary associates of the university may be appointed as internal examiners provided that they meet the criteria set out in HD 10.7.

HD 10.9 The role of the examination panel Chair is neutral in the assessment process and should take no part in the actual assessment of the portfolio of work, or bear any influence on the time available for the examiners to conduct their examination. It is the role of the examination panel Chair:

a) To ensure that the examination is conducted according to the university's regulations and procedures.

b) To ensure that the examiners prepare and submit their independent reports (HD 11.3) and, where required, a list of specified revisions to the covering paper within six weeks of receipt of the portfolio of work.

c) Where the recommendations are not unanimous, to set up a meeting of the examiners to seek a solution.

d) To send by email the completed Higher Doctorate Report Forms and a collated list of any amendments to the Research Degrees Team. At least one copy of the portfolio of work must also be returned to the Research Degrees Team.

Examiners

HD 10.10 The appointment of examiners should be made against the following criteria:

a) Be qualified and have current experience and expertise in the field of the portfolio of work to be examined.

b) Have considerable experience of UK research degree supervision and examination. Collectively have experience of examining a minimum of five UK Doctoral degrees.

c) Must not be junior in employment status to the candidate that they are examining.

An examiner should not be currently registered for a research degree or a Higher Doctorate at this or any other institution.

HD 10.11 Internal examiners should be members of academic staff at The Open University of Lecturer status or above. Visiting professors/academics, research fellows (including post-doctoral researchers), emeritus professors and honorary associates of the university may be appointed as internal examiners provided that they meet the criteria set out in HD 10.10. Associate Lecturers who also hold an academic position and are actively engaged in research at the Open University or elsewhere, as evidenced by their CV, may be appointed as internal examiners.

HD 10.12 External examiners should normally be members of academic staff at a university or research institution, at Lecturer status or above.

HD 10.13 Former members of The Open University staff may not be appointed as an external examiner unless they left the university at least three years previously.

HD 10.14 Associate Lecturers, retired, or emeritus staff of the Open University may not be appointed as external examiners.

HD 10.15 It is the role of the examiners to:

a) Abide by the university's contractual confidentiality statement:

   i) As set out in the External Examiner Acceptance form

   ii) As set out in Appendix 5.

b) Prepare an independent report, (see HD 11.3) assessing whether the candidate has met the requirements for the award of a Higher Doctorate. This should be submitted to the examination panel Chair within six weeks of receipt of the portfolio of work.

c) Make a recommendation on the award of the degree and any revisions required.

d) Check revisions to the portfolio of work following the examination as specified in HD 11.3b.

e) Abide by the university's contractual confidentiality statement (Appendix 5).

HD 10.16 Once the panel is appointed all communication with the examiners on matters related to the portfolio of work and or/the examination until such a time as there is a final outcome must be carried out through the panel Chair, the Research Degrees Team, the Chair of Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee or the Progress Board. The student must only communicate via the examination panel Chair if they need to seek clarification on any matter, before or after examination.

11. Examination

HD 11.1 The examination of a Higher Doctorate is based on an appraisal of the portfolio of work it does not require an oral examination.

HD 11.2 Upon receipt of the portfolio of work and associated documentation (HD 9.2), and providing that the examination panel has been approved (HD 10.1), the Research Degrees Team is solely responsible for confirming receipt to the Chair and sending copies to the examiners together with a copy of the Candidate Declaration Form.

Independent Report Forms

HD 11.3 Each examiner is required to read the portfolio of work, consider whether it satisfies the requirements for the degree (see HD 3.1) and make one of the following recommendations:

a) The candidate be awarded a Higher Doctorate (DLitt or DSc).

b) The candidate be awarded a Higher Doctorate subject to specified revisions of the covering paper.

c) The candidate be not awarded the degree.

Each examiner should then, within six weeks of receipt of the portfolio of work, complete and submit, in confidence and independently of all other parties, the Higher Doctorate Report Form to the examination panel Chair. The forms should be forwarded, by the Chair, in confidence to the Research Degrees Team.

Where the portfolio of work has been found unacceptable for the award of the Higher Doctorate, a candidate may make a new application for registration. This will require a substantially new submission.

HD 11.4 Upon receipt of the Higher Doctorate Report Forms from all of the examiners, the examination panel Chair should collate the recommendations and where applicable any requirements for revisions to the covering paper. The reports should not be shared with the candidate.

HD 11.5 Where the examiners are unanimous in their recommendation the reports should be forwarded, by the Chair of the examination panel, to the Research Degrees Team for onward transmission to the Research Examination Results Approval Committee. Where there is a disagreement between the examiners, the regulations for a non-unanimous decision will be invoked (see HD 11.11 – HD 11.12).

Consideration of the outcome

HD 11.6 Normally within 5 working days of receipt of the Higher Doctorate Report Forms the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee will consider them as outlined in Appendix 6. The Committee may:

a) Ratify the recommendation of the examination panel. Where the Committee approves a recommendation that the candidate be awarded the Higher Doctorate, the Committee will formally approve the award at this stage.

b) Request further clarification from the examination panel regarding the recommended outcome.

c) Approve an alternative outcome – when in exceptional circumstances and following consultation with the examination panel, where there continues to be a demonstrable inconsistency between the recommendation and other approved examination results.

HD 11.7 Upon receipt of the decision from the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee, the Research Degrees Team will send the examination outcome letter and where applicable, a list of any revisions to the candidate.

Where revisions are required:

HD 11.8 Where the examiners are satisfied that the candidate has reached the standard required for the degree but consider that the candidate's submission requires revision, they may recommend that the degree be

awarded subject to the candidate amending the covering paper (HD 11.3b). In such circumstances the following will apply:

a) Where the outcome is ‘award subject to specified revisions of the covering paper’ (HD 11.3b) the candidate must complete and submit the revised portfolio of work and a document that explains how they have met the requirements to the Research Degrees Team, for onward transmission to the nominated examiner, within three months of the date of the examination outcome letter.

b) The revisions must be made to the satisfaction of at least one examiner as agreed by the examiners following the *viva voce.* Examiners may not make additional requirements at this stage.

c) Upon receipt of the revised covering paper, the nominated examiner will, within one month of receipt, complete the Corrected Portfolio of Work Form and return it to the Research Degrees Team, making one of the following recommendations:

    i) the candidate has completed the ‘specified revisions’, has met the academic requirements and should be awarded the degree

    ii) the candidate has not completed the ‘specified revisions’ and should be not awarded the degree.

d) Where the recommendation is that the candidate be awarded the degree for which they were examined (HD 11.8ci) the Corrected Portfolio of Work Form will be forwarded to the Chair of the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee who may approve the award.

e) Where the recommendation is that the candidate has not completed the ‘specified revisions’ to the required standards (HD 11.8cii), the revised covering paper must be considered by the other examiners on the panel who will independently complete a copy of the Corrected Portfolio of Work Form. All of the Corrected Portfolio of Work Forms will then be forwarded to the Research Degrees

Examination Results Approval Committee for consideration as follows:

i) Where the examiners are not in agreement the regulations for non-unanimous decisions will be invoked (HD 11.11 – HD 11.12).

ii) Where the examiners are in agreement the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee may:

1) Ratify the recommendation of the examination panel. Where the Committee approves a recommendation that the student be awarded the degree, the Committee will formally approve the award at this stage.

2) Request further clarification from the examination panel regarding the recommended outcome.

3) Approve an alternative outcome – when in exceptional circumstances and following consultation with the examination panel where there continues to be a demonstrable inconsistency between the recommendation and other approved examination results.

Where there is no award:

HD 11.9 Where the examiners are not satisfied that the candidate has reached the standard required for the award of a Higher Doctorate and recommend that the candidate be not awarded the degree the Outcome letter must include details of why the candidate failed to meet the requirements for the award of a Higher Doctorate.

HD 11.10 Where a candidate has failed to obtain a Higher Doctorate, a substantially new application may be submitted. Such applications cannot be made until a period of 12 calendar months has elapsed from the date of the examination outcome.

Where the examiners are not in agreement – a non-unanimous decision:

HD 11.11 Where the recommendations are not unanimous the Chair of the examination panel shall arrange a meeting of the examiners to seek a resolution. If this is not possible the Chair shall submit their report of the meeting(s), together with the examiners' separate reports and recommendations to the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee who may:

a) Accept a majority decision.

b) Accept the decision of the external examiners if they are in agreement.

c) Request the Progress Board to appoint an additional external examiner.

HD 11.12 Where an additional external examiner is appointed, they shall not be informed of the recommendations of the other examiners. On receipt of the report from the additional external examiner the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee will reconsider the outcome and normally accept a majority decision.

Failure to meet the deadlines for submission of amendments and/or revisions:

HD 11.13 Where following a *viva voce* examination, the candidate is unable to work, they may apply for a study break (see HD 4.5).

HD 11.14 In the absence of an approved study break candidates are expected to meet the deadline for the submission of their revised portfolio of work. The Research Degrees Team is not authorised to accept any portfolio of work submitted after the deadline. In such circumstances the matter will be referred to Progress Board together with any evidence of mitigating circumstances that led to the failure to meet the deadline. Progress Board may or may not accept the late submission.

12. Post award requirements

HD 12.1 Following confirmation that the academic requirements for the award of the degree have been met candidates are required to submit a copy of their submission and any associated documentation/materials to the university Library in accordance with the guidance within The Open University thesis submission guidelines. Candidates are expected to complete this within one week of the award letter. A degree certificate will only be issued upon completion of this requirement.

13. Appeals and complaints

HD 13.1 A candidate may make a request for the academic body charged with making decisions on admission, assessment, candidate progression or award to review a decision. Candidates may make such an appeal against a decision providing that they meet the criteria outlined in the university's appeals process.

HD 13.2 A candidate may express their dissatisfaction concerning the provision of a programme of study or related academic or administrative service, which is not an appeal against a decision. Candidates may make such a complaint using the university's complaints process.

HD 13.3 A candidate must not take their appeal or complaint outside of the university until all internal processes have been exhausted and have been deemed unable to resolve the complaint or appeal.

Further clarification

If you have any queries around the content provided within this document and how to interpret it, please contact:

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About this Document

Summary of Significant Changes since last version

The following changes have been made

Universal Changes

- Typographical errors, renumbering as appropriate
- Third Party Monitors changed to Independent Advisors

Substantive Changes

a) Statements relating to the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) as follows:

   i) RD 15.3 a (viii); RD 15.6 a (viii); RDD 14.3 a (viii); RDD 14.6 a (viii); PD 13.4 – the requirement for a statement about the any use of Generative AI as part of the upgrade submission

   ii) RD 17.2b; RDD 16.2b; PD 15.2b; PW 11.2 d; HD 9.2 b – requirement for an executive summary written in assessable language to be included within the thesis/portfolio

   iii) RD 17.2 c (vii); RDD 16.2 c (vii); PD 15.2 c (vii); PW 11.2 f (iii); HD 9.2 e (iii) - the requirement for a statement about the any use of Generative AI as part of the thesis submission

   iv) PW 3.1 d (v) - the requirement for a statement about the any use of Generative AI as part of the submission of the application

   v) HD 2.4 d - the requirement for a statement about the any use of Generative AI as part of the submission of the supporting paper

vi) Appendix 2 – Responsibilities of Supervisors – j. added a section on Generative AI

b) RD 17.2 c; RDD 16.2 c; PD 15.2 c; PW 11.2 e; HD 9.2 c the requirement for student to submit a CRediT Taxonomy as part of their thesis/portfolio

c) RD 17.9 changed to provide clarity on the creative work

d) Appendix 4 – added line management as a potential conflict of interest

e) Appendix 2 – addition of Supervisor Training Guidelines

Policies Superseded by this Document

Research Degree Regulations Version 1.5 effective from 1 August 2025

Document Information

Version number: 1.6

Approved by: Research Degree Committee

Effective from: 1 August 2026

Date for review: August 2027

Appendix 1: Degree characteristics

The Open University's research degrees graduates are expected to meet the attributes outlined in the QAA 'Master's Degree Characteristics Statement' or the 'Characteristics Statement: Doctoral Degree as appropriate.

The Open University's research degrees are awarded to candidates who have demonstrated that they have met the descriptors specified in The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies.

1.1 Master of Philosophy

Graduates of research master's degrees (including the MPhil) typically have:

(Source: Characteristics Statement: Master's Degree')

a) a specialised or advanced study during in which the student demonstrates a deeper understanding of the core principles of research as well as the ability to conduct research

b) undertaking independent research with supervision and guidance

c) an in-depth and advanced knowledge and understanding of their subject and/or profession, informed by current practice, scholarship and research. This will include a critical awareness of current issues and developments in the subject and/or profession; critical skills; knowledge of professional responsibility, integrity and ethics; and the ability to reflect on their own progress as a learner

d) ability to use a range of techniques and research methods applicable to advanced scholarship in the subject. Graduates of specialist or advanced study master's are likely to be characterised in particular by their ability to complete a research project in the subject, which in some subjects includes a critical review of existing literature or other scholarly outputs. Meanwhile, graduates of professional or practice master's are able to apply research and critical perspectives to professional situations, both practical and theoretical, and to use a range of techniques and research methods applicable to their professional activities.

Descriptors for a higher education qualification at Master's level

(Source: The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies)

Master's degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- 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 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.

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences;
- demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level;
- continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level.

And holders will have:

- The qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:
    - the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility;
    - decision-making in complex and unpredictable situations;
    - the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.

1.2 Doctor of Philosophy

Graduates of a doctoral degree should be able to:

(Source: 'Characteristics Statement: Doctoral Degree')

a) search for, discover, access, retrieve, sift, interpret, analyse, evaluate, manage, conserve and communicate an ever-increasing volume of knowledge from a range of sources;

b) think critically about problems to produce innovative solutions and create new knowledge;

c) plan, manage and deliver projects, selecting and justifying appropriate methodological processes while recognising, evaluating and minimising the risks involved and impact on the environment;

d) exercise professional standards in research and research integrity, and engage in professional practice, including ethical, legal, and health and safety aspects, bringing enthusiasm, perseverance and integrity to bear on their work activities;

e) support, collaborate with and lead colleagues, using a range of teaching, communication and networking skills to influence practice and policy in diverse environments;

f) appreciate the need to engage in research with impact and to be able to communicate it to diverse audiences, including the public;

g) build relationships with peers, senior colleagues, students and stakeholders with sensitivity to equality, diversity and cultural issues.

Furthermore, doctoral researchers are increasingly being encouraged to develop their foreign language and enterprise skills, and to cultivate business acumen.

All doctoral graduates will have developed during the course of their research additional specialist knowledge within their discipline, while those who have studied a professional doctorate are likely to have been required to have particular professional experience that informs the topic of their research studies. They may well also have been required to engage in further study related to that professional field as part of their doctorate.

Finally, doctoral graduates are able to prepare, plan and manage their own career development while knowing when and where to draw on support.

Descriptors for a higher education qualification at Doctoral level

(Source: The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies)

Doctoral degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication. Professional doctorates aim to develop an individual's professional practice and to support them in producing a contribution to (professional) knowledge.
- a systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic 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 to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems

- a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences
- continue to undertake pure and/or applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas or approaches.

And holders will have:

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent environments.

Appendix 2: Code of practice for research degree supervisors and postgraduate research students

This code of practice:

- Sets expectations for supervisor professional development including training;
- Provides guidelines for the conduct of the relationship between postgraduate research students (PGRs) and their supervisors;
- Outlines the responsibilities of PGRs and supervisors, suggesting what each can reasonably expect of the other; and
- Provides examples of good supervisory practice that support the principles as set out in the supervision policy.

For the code of practice to be effective there must be a continual process supervisor professional development and a continuous process of open discussion and negotiation between PGRs and their supervisors. This code is intended to provide a framework for research in an atmosphere of scholarship and collegiality.

The code is designed to enable PGRs to complete their degrees successfully within the expected timeframes, as described in the Research Degrees Regulations.

Responsibilities of the supervisors – overall

By taking on research degree supervision, supervisors agree to:

- Use PGR Manager to support PGRs with administrative requirements throughout the degree.
- Become familiar with, and abide by, relevant structures and procedures:
    - The Research Degree Regulations including all appendices
    - Progress reporting and upgrade assessment
    - OU/ARC support systems, including counselling, welfare, and contingency funding

- Additional requirements for PGRs with external funding e.g. through UKRI where applicable
- Reporting requirements for PGRs on Student Route visas where applicable
- Health and safety requirements and training, as appropriate
- Ethical standard, and approvals at the OU/ARC
- IP arrangements
- How to support or seek help for PGRs in acute distress

Responsibilities of the supervisors- Professional Development

Supervisor training is provided by the Open University to support supervisors in the development of their role. All supervisors are expected to regularly engage with that provision and be committed to ongoing development of their supervision skills.

Supervisor training is subdivided into three Tiers. Supervisors must engage with and successfully complete Tier 1 and Tier 2 to become registered/certified supervisors. Supervisors are expected to engage with relevant Tier 3 modules at relevant points in the journeys of the PGRs they are supervising.

Tier 1: Tier 1 consists of an asynchronous online module. All internal, external and ARC-based Supervisors must complete and pass Tier 1 before the supervision team for a new PGR is approved during the application process, and henceforth every 4 years while actively supervising.

In addition, Supervisors of international PGRs on a Student Route visa must complete and/or renew mandatory Tier 1 'Student Route' visa training every 2 years. This ensures that supervisors are aware of any changes in UKVI policy.

Tier 2: Tier 2 consists of an online or in-person, synchronous, Supervision Practice Workshop. All supervisors new to supervision must complete and pass the Tier 2 module within the first 12 months of starting the role within the university, or within

the ARC. Supervisors who are new to the OU, especially those based in ARCs, are additionally encouraged to attend.

In-date IRDS and Refresher Training count as equivalent as Tier 1 and Tier 2.

Tier 3: Tier 3 consists of a series of workshops designed to be accessed at the point of need, including topics such as supervision through upgrade, writing up, preparing for viva, working with PGRs with mental health difficulties, specific learning difficulties or neurodivergent conditions. All internal and ARC-based supervisors should attend Tier 3 events that reinforce/support their professional development and as needed in relation to their PGR journey and circumstances.

In addition, supervisors should attend supervisor fora organised by the School/Department or Faculty.

Responsibilities of the supervisors – academic progress, pastoral care and administration

Supervisors are responsible for the academic progress and pastoral or personal support of their PGRs, and for dealing with administrative matters. They should provide the guidance and support necessary for successful completion of the research project.

Supervisors are responsible for:

a) Establishing a framework for supervision at the beginning of the PGR's research. This should include arrangements for regular supervisory meetings and key milestones during registration.

b) Defining the role of each supervisor on the team.

c) Meeting the PGR regularly and frequently, at the intervals agreed at the beginning of the research project and in line with the Supervision and Academic Attendance and Engagement policies.

d) Being accessible to give advice by whatever means is most suitable, taking into account the location of both the supervisor and PGR, and the mode of study.

e) Ensuring the PGR has up-to-date supervisor contact details, including when they are away from the normal place of work.

f) Providing assistance in defining the topic and objectives of research to be undertaken, particularly at an early stage.

g) Making sure that the project:

- falls within the supervisors' area of expertise;
- can be completed with the resources available;
- can be completed within the prescribed period of study;
- is suitable for the degree that the PGR intends to take;
- for funded PGRs, that they can complete within the period of the studentship.

h) Supporting the PGR in their professional development and specifically undertake a training needs analysis. In particular, ensuring that PGRs know about research training provided by the University/ARC and by the discipline, ensuring they are aware of any attendance requirements and the means of planning and recording their development. The training needs analysis should be reviewed on an annual basis.

i) Ensuring that the health and safety policies of the University/ARC and of the discipline or Affiliated Research Centre are brought to PGRs' attention and explained.

j) Ensuring that their PGRs understand good research practice and the principles of research integrity as set out in the Research Code of Practice. This includes:

i. ethics review,

ii. research conduct,

iii. plagiarism (see PGR Plagiarism and Research Misconduct Policy)

iv. the use of, and disclosure of, Generative AI (see also the Thesis Submission Guidelines).

v. Identifying and mitigating any hazards or risks associated with their research work (see Section 5 of the Research Code of Practice).

vi. Ensuring that safety and other relevant procedures are followed.

k) Ensuring ethics review has been undertaken and approval in place, where applicable.

l) Ensuring that suitable alternative support is arranged if any supervisors are going to absent for a period of three months, or longer.

m) Responding promptly and constructively to written work, within the schedule agreed at the beginning of the project.

n) Keeping to the monitoring and reporting timetable agreed at the beginning of the project including regular progress monitoring reports.

o) Ensuring that examiners are nominated in good time, so that the examination can go ahead as soon as possible after submission of the thesis.

p) Ensuring that the PGR has an opportunity to participate in a *mock viva voce.*

q) Ensuring that PGRs understand the requirements for submitting non-text outputs as part of their thesis and guiding them through the process in line with the Thesis Submission Guidelines.

r) Maintaining records of formal supervision meetings as agreed with PGRs in PGR Manager (OU-based supervisors) or in such a way they can be accessed and understood by anyone with a legitimate need to see them (ARC-based supervisors).

s) For those PGRs who enter the UK on a Student Route visa, ensuring any breaches to Student Route visa compliance are reported.

PGRs can also reasonably expect their supervisors to:

a) Treat them professionally and ensure that they get proper credit for their work.

b) Give advice about the proposed research project and the standard expected for the degree the PGR intends to take.

c) Arrange a supervision meeting as soon as possible after registration. This would usually be within the first week for full-time PGRs but may take longer to arrange for part-time PGRs.

d) Make sure that the first meeting covers the areas set out in the Good supervisory arrangements and practice below or, if that is not possible, that those areas are covered in another way.

e) Suggest some suitable directed reading before registration.

f) Offer advice about literature sources and other research resources.

g) Deal promptly with any research problems.

h) Take an active role in introducing the PGR to meetings of learned societies, seminars and so on, and to other researchers in the field.

i) Offer advice about the presentation and publication of research work, and ensure that attribution is discussed before presentation/publication.

j) Put the PGR in touch with specialists inside or outside the University or Affiliated Research Centre if part of the research falls outside the supervisors' expertise. If appropriate, the supervisors should recommend the appointment of specialists as internal or external supervisors.

k) Provide support by encouragement and constructive criticism and advice.

Responsibilities of PGRs

PGRs are expected to:

a) Work conscientiously and independently within the guidance offered. While it is important to keep supervisors informed and to show work to them, PGRs should be self-directed.

b) Participate fully in research training provided by the University and the discipline or the Affiliated Research Centre as required, aligned with their professional development needs.

c) Agree the frequency, length and mode of supervisory meetings with their supervisors and come to supervisory meetings well prepared and with a clear agenda.

d) Before the end of the first year (the first 24 months for part-time PGRs), have the area of research defined, be acquainted with the necessary background knowledge, complete the literature review and have a provisional framework for the progress of the research, with a timetable for the rest of the research period and ensure that ethical approval has been sought.

e) Maintain progress according to the timetable agreed with the supervisors.

f) Present written material in time for comment and discussion before going on to the next stage. As groundwork for the thesis, PGRs should write rough drafts of potential chapters as soon as possible. Those in the sciences should keep a systematic record of all experimental work attempted and accomplished. It is good practice for PGRs in other disciplines to keep logbooks of their research.

g) Ensure that their English is good enough for the presentation of a thesis. Those whose first language is not English should seek advice. (This does not apply to PGRs who have permission to submit their theses in Welsh or Gaelic.)

h) Write regular reports, as agreed at the outset, on the progress of the research.

i) Ensure they adhere to the Research Code of Practice, the Research Degree Regulations, and the Conditions of Registration for Postgraduate Research Students including the payment of any fees due.

j) Tell the University, and the Affiliated Research Centre where applicable, of any disruptions, special needs or changes which might affect their study.

k) Be familiar with the regulations and policies relevant to their registration and award.

l) Maintain research records in such a way they can be accessed and understood by anyone with a legitimate need to see them.

m) Maintain records of formal supervision meetings as agreed with supervisors and in such a way they can be accessed and understood by anyone with a legitimate need to see them.

Supervisors can also reasonably expect PGRs to:

a) Produce a substantial amount of written work, even if only in draft form, before the end of the first year (24 months for part-time PGRs). The interpretation of 'substantial' should be agreed between supervisors and PGRs at the outset.

b) Tell their supervisors about other people with whom they discuss their work.

c) Discuss with their supervisors the form of guidance and kind of comment they find most helpful.

d) Fully engage in the induction process.

e) Take the initiative in raising problems or difficulties in a timely manner, however elementary or trivial they seem. PGRs as well as supervisors have a responsibility to initiate contact and raise questions.

f) Recognise that supervisors may have many other demands on their time. PGRs should hand in work in good time and give adequate notice if they ask supervisors for unscheduled meetings or to provide references.

g) Ensure that when publishing any part of their thesis work their co-authors are appropriately included, including technical support staff. Ensure that where the Open University is given as the PGR's academic affiliation that submission for publication is with the prior knowledge and approval of the appropriate academic staff at the Open University (normally the PGR's supervisor).

Good supervisory arrangements and practice

The following points are recommended to PGRs, supervisors, disciplines and ARCs as good supervisory arrangements and practice.

Supervision meetings

At their initial meeting the supervisors and the PGR should draw up a written agreement on the role of each supervisor and arrangements for supervisory support. PGRs and supervisors should have regular meetings at which academic advice is given and through which progress is monitored, at least at the minimum frequency and location outlined in the Academic Attendance and Engagement Policy. Notes should be retained of formal meetings, in accordance with the Supervision Policy. This is particularly important at the beginning of the research, so that the project makes a good start. The success of research projects depends largely on the help and guidance offered by supervisors, especially in the early stages of the work. Close contact at that time is essential to avoid later difficulties.

Frequency of meetings

This will depend on the PGR's circumstances (full-time or part-time) and the nature and stage of the research project. Meetings with full-time PGRs should normally be face to face; however, hybrid and online meetings are possible. Supervisory meetings with part-time PGRs should be arranged according to whatever means of communication is most appropriate, ideally with at least one supervision meeting per year face-to-face.

Subject to the minimum requirements as outlined in the Academic Attendance and Engagement Policy, the frequency of supervision meetings will vary during the course of a PGR's research programme especially at key times, such as during the first months of study, prior to upgrade; and approaching thesis submission. Supervisors may also choose to schedule additional meetings with PGRs to help meet their individual learning needs.

Arrangements for supervisory support, including the frequency of meetings, must be agreed at the first meeting, and the schedule must be adhered to by PGRs and supervisors.

The first meeting

The first meeting between PGR and supervisors is particularly important in establishing a provisional framework for future support and getting the PGR's academic work off to a good start. The following areas should be covered in the first meeting:

- role of each supervisor;
- frequency of future meetings;
- timetable for early meetings;
- arrangements for seeing and commenting on written work;
- monitoring arrangements and timetable;
- safety;
- ethics and integrity;
- research facilities available;
- University and discipline, or Affiliated Research Centre training programmes and attendance requirements;
- relevant protocols and codes of practice including ethics review, standards of academic conduct, plagiarism and this code;
- general framework for the whole research project;
- detailed plan for the early stages of the research project.

Subsequent meetings

Regular meetings, in accordance with the Supervision Policy, Academic Attendance and Engagement Policy and agreed schedule, are essential to monitor progress and agree timetables for the future. The research timetable should be committed to paper so that supervisors can see whether deadlines have been met.

The length of meetings will vary. An hour or so is usual for full-time PGRs, especially if the meetings are more frequent than monthly. Meetings may be longer for part-time PGRs whose meetings are less frequent.

At the beginning of registration, it is important that PGR and supervisors together undertake an assessment of the PGR's professional development needs and that skills development is regularly monitored throughout registration.

Monitoring progress

Supervisors use different methods to monitor their PGRs' progress, and they should agree with the PGR at the initial meeting how it is to be done. Monitoring may take the form of a formal review of progress and forward planning or a discussion of general matters relating the PGR's research. PGRs and supervisors are required by the University's Research Degrees Committee to submit a regular report to the Associate Dean Research or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator on the progress of their PGRs, and this should be taken into account when working out a monitoring schedule.

The University's Research Degrees Committee requires a substantial review of progress for full-time PGRs shortly before the end of the first year, for part-time PGRs before the end of the two-year upgrade period. A meeting between the Head of School and the PGR is required during the first year of registration for full-time PGRs, during the upgrade period for part-time PGRs. The timetables agreed at supervision meetings should be used to see whether deadlines are being met and progress is being made.

PGRs should prepare progress reports for their supervisors at regular agreed intervals.

Where supervisors have concerns about the quality of progress of a PGR's work they should implement the procedures for managing unsatisfactory progress (Appendix 3 of the Research Degree Regulations), with support from the Head of School and Associate Dean Research, or ARC Research Degrees Coordinator as appropriate.

Associate Deans Research or ARC Research Degrees Coordinator are accountable for PGR progress. They are required to ensure that PGRs in their academic unit or Affiliated Research Centre make adequate academic progress, and to take any action required to enable PGRs to meet their submission dates. They are also responsible for ensuring that PGRs receive copies of their progress monitoring reports when they have been endorsed.

Changes in supervision

PGRs have the right to discuss and criticise the supervision they are receiving. Initially, any concerns should be raised with supervisors at the regular supervision meetings. If they cannot be resolved, the PGR should discuss the difficulties with their Independent Advisor and the Head of School, the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator where applicable, or the Research Degrees Team.

If the problem cannot be resolved new supervisors will be appointed, but there may be difficulties in finding a replacement supervisor who has experience of the thesis subject area.

Documents

All support documents and relevant links are included in the Forms and Guidance page on the GSN. Useful links include:

a) Supervisor-Student Agreement

b) Health and Safety Policy: Travel, Fieldwork and Work Away from The Open University Workplace

c) PGR Manager advice and other general advice for PGRs and supervisors

d) Links to supervisor training and other supervisor resources

e) Procedure for Dealing with Allegations of Research Malpractice or Misconduct;

f) Plagiarism and Research Misconduct Policy (for Postgraduate Research Students)

g) Student Complaints and Appeals Procedure;

h) Research Data Management;

i) Thesis submission guidelines

j) Examination guidelines

Appendix 3: Procedures for addressing failure to make satisfactory academic progress

a) The registration of all research degree students is subject to satisfactory academic progress.

b) Supervisors and Associate Deans Research, and the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator where applicable, are responsible for the ongoing monitoring and reporting on research student progress and, are accountable to the University's Research Degrees Committee via Progress Board for these activities.

c) These procedures seek to reconcile the interests of the student and the staff responsible for their studies as well as those of the university whilst ensuring that the wider expectations of fairness are met. They are concerned with both responsibilities and entitlements and are intended to reflect the principles of natural justice, as well as being transparent and timely.

d) At the point at which it is recognised that there are significant academic concerns or that the academic progress of a student is unsatisfactory, the supervisors are required to arrange a meeting with the student to:

   i) Inform the student that there are concerns and their academic progress is unsatisfactory.

   ii) Explain clearly what those concerns are and why their progress is unsatisfactory and what they must do to address the situation.

   iii) Explore with the student the reason(s) regarding the concerns and why they have not made satisfactory progress; suggesting strategies for overcoming any problems or difficulties identified by the student.

   iv) Remind the student that research degree registration is subject to satisfactory academic progress.

v) Set clear tasks for the student to complete by specified deadlines to allow them to demonstrate whether satisfactory progress can be made. The tasks set may be written and/or practical and should be appropriate to the student's project and the stage of her/his studies.

vi) After the meeting, write to the student to:

1) Confirm the discussion of points a) to e) as outlined above.

2) Encourage the student to seek help and advice from someone else (e.g. the Head of School, Independent Advisor or Associate Dean Research) if they have concerns or difficulties that they do not wish to discuss with the supervisors.

3) Warn the student that if they are unable to make satisfactory academic progress the Head of School will be asked to recommend to the Progress Board that the student's registration is terminated. If the Head of School is also one of the student's supervisors, the Associate Dean Research should be involved.

vii) Inform the Head of School that the student's progress is unsatisfactory and the action being taken to address the situation.

e) Where the academic progress of a student is unsatisfactory, the Head of School, or delegate acting on behalf of the Head of School, or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator, where applicable, is required to arrange a meeting with the student to:

i) Explore the reason(s) why s/he has not made satisfactory progress.

ii) Suggest strategies and/or take appropriate action to overcome any problems or difficulties identified by the student.

iii) check that the student understands:

1) why their progress is unsatisfactory.

2) what they have to do to demonstrate whether satisfactory progress can be made by the specified deadlines.

3) research degree registration is subject to satisfactory progress.

4) if they are unable to make satisfactory progress the termination of her/his registration will be recommended to the University's Progress Board.

iv) Discuss the situation with the supervisors, suggesting strategies and/or taking appropriate action to overcome any problems or difficulties.

If the student declines to attend a meeting with the Head of School, the process outlined in 5 (a) – (c) should be undertaken by correspondence.

In the case of an Affiliated Research Centre student, the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator, should, after this meeting inform the University's Research Degrees Team that the student's progress is unsatisfactory and outline the action being taken to address the situation.

1) If in spite of action being taken as outlined above, a student is unable to demonstrate satisfactory progress, the supervisors and Head of School, or Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator where applicable, should:

    a) Inform the student that their progress remains unsatisfactory.

    b) Confirm to the student that a formal recommendation for the termination of their registration will be made to the Progress Board.

    c) Check whether the student would prefer to withdraw from study.

2) The supervisors are responsible for preparing a written report, working with the Head of School or discipline, or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator where applicable, recommending the termination of a student's registration for failure to make satisfactory progress, to the University's Progress Board. The report should:

    a) outline why the student's progress is unsatisfactory

    b) provide details of the action taken to address the situation.

    c) confirm that the student has:

        i) received written warnings about their unsatisfactory progress and the implications of not being able to demonstrate satisfactory progress

        ii) had an opportunity to discuss the situation with the Head of School, or delegate, or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator, where applicable

        iii) been encouraged to seek help and advice from other appropriate members of staff

d) Include appropriate documentary evidence. This must include all of the agreed notes from the formal supervision meetings and a complete record of progress reports.

The report must be ratified by the Head of School, or the Affiliated Research Centre Research Degrees Coordinator where applicable and copied to the student before being sent to the Head of Research Degrees.

3) The report will be referred to the Progress Board, who may:

a) ratify the recommendation that the student's registration should be terminated for failure to make academic progress

b) arrange for the student's work to be assessed by a suitably qualified external assessor

c) allow the student to remain registered for a specified period subject to appropriate conditions and requirements.

In the case of (b) a decision about the termination of the student's registration will be made on receipt of the external assessor's report.

4) Should the Progress Board ratify the recommendation to terminate the student's registration (8a above) they will send a formal letter to the student informing them of the decision. The letter will include information on the university appeals/complaints process.

Appendix 4: Conflicts of Interest

The non-exhaustive list below represents potential conflicts of interest that should be taken into account when appointing examination panels.

a) Plans to employ the candidate.

b) Co-publication with the candidate, the supervisor, Chair (within the last five years) or an intention to do so. Please note that where there are a significant number of publications the five-year rule may be superseded by (e) below.

c) Submission of a research funding application in which the candidate or the supervisors are involved.

d) Where a close personal relationship is defined as 'where two adults are married or in a de facto relationship, or two adults who are not married or in a de facto relationship live together and provide each other with domestic support and personal care'.

e) Involvement, past or present with the candidate, the supervisors or other members of an examination panel in a close professional, line management or contractual relationship.

f) Is related to another member of the examination panel.

g) A past student of any of the supervisors, with an ongoing professional relationship with the supervisors.

h) Acted on a regular basis in the capacity of an external examiner for a particular supervisor and/or department or Affiliated Research Centre, where applicable.

i) Acted as an external supervisor for another current or recent student in that department or Affiliated Research Centre, where applicable.

j) Acted as an Independent Advisor for the candidate.

Where an internal examiner has previously acted as a mini viva assessor, they are not on that basis alone deemed to have a conflict of interest.

The non-exhaustive list below represents potential conflicts of interest that should be taken into account when appointing supervisors.

a) Involvement, past or present with the applicant and/or other members of the supervisory team in a close personal relationship. Where a close personal relationship is defined as ‘where two adults are married or in a de facto relationship, or two adults are not married or in a de facto relationship live together and provide each other with domestic support and personal care’.

b) Involvement, past or present with the applicant and/or other members of the supervisory team in a close professional or contractual relationship outside the bounds of normal academic practice. Normal academic practice would include for instance co-authoring papers or applying for grants.

c) Is related to the applicant or another member of the supervisory team.

Appendix 5: The Open University’s confidentiality statement

Members of staff, including external examiners, may in the course of their duty with the university have access to confidential information, in particular, that relating to assignments, examination papers and marks, as well as personal information on applicants, students, graduates and staff. Such information should not (either during or after service with the university) be divulged without due authorisation. All members of staff must abide by the provisions of the Data Protection Act and should inform themselves of the university's Code of Practice, available from Heads of Units.

External examiners must comply with the confidentiality statement as set out in the External Examiner Acceptance form.

Staff are not normally required to give any written undertaking of secrecy in connection with their work, but the university may make exceptions to this practice in certain circumstances. A report of any such exceptions and a brief statement of the reasons will be made to the Open University and UCU (University College Union) Negotiating Committee each year.

Appendix 6: Research degree examination recommendations

Following a research degree examination or re-examination a recommendation is made by the examination panel to the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee.

Recommendation will be considered as follows:

a) Where the recommendation is that:

   i) The student be awarded the degree (RD 19.11a or RD 19.20a; RDD 18.11a or RDD 20a; PD 17.11a or PD 17.20a; PW 12.11a or PW 12.15ci; HD 10.3a or HD 10.8ci), or

   ii) The student be awarded the degree subject to minor corrections and modifications to the thesis (RD 19.11b or RD 19.20b; RDD 18.11b or RDD 20b; PD 17.11b or PD 17.20b) or specified revisions to the portfolio of work (PW 12.11b; HD 10.3b), or

   iii) The student be awarded the degree subject to substantial amendments to the thesis (RD 19.11c or RD 19.20c; RDD 18.11c or RDD 20c; PD 17.11c or PD 17.20c)

   The completed Pre-viva report forms and the Examination report form will be considered by:

   i) The Chair or Deputy Chair of the Committee

   ii) A member of the committee within the subject area

   iii) A member of the committee outside the subject area.

b) Where the recommendation is that:

   i) The student for a PhD or Professional Doctorate examination be awarded a MPhil (RD 19.11e or RD 19.20d; RDD 18.11e or RDD 18.20d; PD 17.11e or PD 17.20d), or

ii) The student be permitted to resubmit their thesis for re-examination following major revision, (RD 19.11d or f; RDD 18.11d or f; PD 17.11d or f), or

iii) The student for a research degree be not awarded the degree and not be permitted to be re-examined (RD 19.11g or RD 19.20e; RDD 18.11g or RDD 18.20.e; PD 17.11g or PD 17.20e; PW 12.11c or PW 12.15cii; HD 10.3c or HD 10.8cii)

The completed Pre-viva report forms and the Examination report form will be considered by all members of the Committee.

Where the examiners are not in agreement (RD 19.28 to RD19.29; RDD 18.28 to RDD 18.29; PD 17.28 to PD 17.29; PW 12.17 to PW 12.18; HD 10.11 to HD 10.12) the completed Pre-viva report forms and the Examination report form will be considered by all members of the Committee.

Appendix 7: Exceptional circumstances

This is an account of what is considered to be a definition of Exceptional Circumstances with a list of examples of circumstances that are normally considered to be exceptional, and those that are normally not. Whilst the term ‘exceptional’ occurs throughout the Research Degrees Regulations, this Appendix is relevant to:

Research degree qualification regulations specifically for Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy

- RD 9.6
- RD 10.1
- RD 15.2
- RD 15.5

Research degree qualification regulations specifically for Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy by Distance Learning

- RDD 8.6
- RDD 9.1
- RDD 14.2
- RDD 14.5

Research degree qualification regulations specifically for Professional Doctorates

- PD 7.1
- PD 8.5
- PD 9.1
- PD 13.1

Research degree qualification regulations specifically for Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) by Published Work

- PW 6.5
- PW 7.1

Regulations specifically for Higher Doctorate awards

- HD 4.5
- HD 5.1

Definition and examples

Definition of Exceptional Circumstances

a) An exceptional circumstance is an event or problem that was not expected and can be proven to have prevented a student from being able to progress with their research degree, to the best of their abilities. Such a circumstance would be unpreventable and outside of the control of the student.

b) Examples of Exceptional Circumstances which may be considered are listed below. Each matter will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. For an exceptional circumstance to be considered it should normally be reported at the time and not retrospectively.

c) Exceptional Circumstances:

   i) Exceptional medical circumstances e.g. hospitalisation, or incapacitation through injury, physical or mental health crises.

   ii) Long term or chronic physical or mental health illness that worsens temporarily or permanently.

   iii) Close bereavement. ‘Close’ would be partner, child, parent, sibling, grandparent and grandchild. It is recognised that those considered close may vary according to cultural context or individual circumstance. Housemates or very close friends may also be considered as ‘close’.

Close bereavement, which in an employment context, would lead to compassionate leave.

iv) Death of a registered assistance animal.

v) Unanticipated change in caring responsibilities.

vi) A serious and unexpected disruption to personal or family life.

vii) Victim of a serious crime/experience of harassment or assault of any type.

viii) Disabilities or registered caring responsibilities for which reasonable adjustments are not yet in place and where the delay is not due to the student.

ix) Exceptional and foreseeable transport difficulties that could not be avoided e.g. cancelled flights. This does not include every-day issues e.g. traffic congestion, missed buses or trains.

x) Legal proceedings requiring attendance (e.g. jury service; as a witness).

xi) Military conflict, natural disaster, pandemic, or extreme weather event.

xii) Exceptional and unforeseen financial hardship.

d) Examples of Circumstances that are not Exceptional and so will not normally be considered:

i) Lack of awareness of deadlines: Upgrade process; end-registration date; corrected. thesis submission deadline.

ii) Failure to request a study break at the time of need.

iii) A change in the scope or direction of a research project.

iv) Death of a pet.

v) Weddings.

vi) Constraints arising from paid employment.

vii) Holidays.

viii) Moving home.

ix) Disabilities for which reasonable adjustments have been made.

x) Planned health appointments.

xi) Failure, loss or theft of data, a computer or other equipment.

xii) Poor time management.

xiii) Poor project management