

# Research Degrees Handbook: Professional Doctorates

## 2021-2022

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This handbook provides information regarding the services available to research degree students, and advice about what to do at key points in the student journey. It should be read in conjunction with the [Research Degree Regulations](#) and the [Conditions of Registration for Postgraduate Research \(PGR\) Students](#).

This handbook has been prepared by the Graduate School and the Business and Online Support Services unit of The Open University.

While The Open University has done everything possible to ensure accuracy, the information in this handbook may change during the life of this edition due to changes in regulations or policy or because of financial or other constraints. When regulations and policies are updated, the most current edition will apply to all students irrespective of when they registered, unless special provision is made for particular groups or cohorts of students.

The Open University reserves the right to record phone calls with students to make sure that it has carried out any instructions correctly and to help improve services through staff training.

The Open University is incorporated by Royal Charter (RC 000391), an exempt charity in England & Wales and a charity registered in Scotland (SC 038302). The Open University is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority in relation to its secondary activity of credit broking.

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## Introduction

### Welcome to research at The Open University

The Open University's mission is to be open to people, places, methods and ideas, and this is reflected in its research which has the same openness and global reach. The research community comprises nearly 1,000 postgraduate research students, based at the state-of-the-art research facilities on campus in Milton Keynes, offsite, or working in one of the University's 20 Affiliated Research Centres (ARCs) around the world. 161 students were awarded research degrees by The Open University in the academic year 2019/20.

Our innovative research and development ranks in the top third of all UK universities and influences national and international policy and practice; it enriches the lives of ordinary people around the world.

In the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014, 72 % of all Open University research submitted was graded as internationally excellent or world leading. The REF assessment of impact of research on society has shown that our research makes a substantial contribution to the economy, policy making and quality of life in the UK and across the globe. Examples of these outstanding impacts include:

- Space researchers built the instrument *Ptolemy*, part of the *Philae* lander, which landed on comet 67P in November 2014.
- Research on the climate fauna at the earth's poles featured in the BBC TV programme *Frozen Planet*, which was watched by over 10.8 million viewers per episode.
- Research into design of sustainable growth is influencing the development of transport technologies and systems in Milton Keynes.
- Innovation research has influenced government policies on the pharmaceutical industry in several African countries.
- Research by the Institute of Social Marketing on alcohol marketing led the British Medical Association to call for a ban on alcohol advertising and the introduction of minimum alcohol prices.

The Open University aims to ensure that its research continues to be recognised for excellence and impact, delivering substantial benefits to the University's mission and priorities.

The aims of The Open University's Research Plan, 'Research Shaping the Future' are to:

- Ensure that our research transforms lives by meeting the challenges of the twenty-first century and promotes social justice.
- Improve our national ranking in the next Research Excellence Framework.
- Achieve global influence for our research through open and innovative forms of knowledge sharing, supported by digital technologies.
- Continue to use our research to inform our curriculum and underpin an outstanding learning experience for all students.
- Support, develop and value the research community in a sustainable environment that fosters creativity and collaboration.

### **How to use this handbook**

This handbook should be read together with the [Conditions of Registration for PGR Students](#) and the [Research Degree Regulations](#) prior to registration and subsequently referred to throughout registration. Upon acceptance of an offer of registration, students will be bound by the [Conditions of Registration for PGR Students](#), the [Research Degree Regulations](#) and relevant policies on the [Forms and Guidance section](#) of the Graduate School Network website.

### **Online resources**

#### **The Research Website and Graduate School Network (GSN)**

The [Graduate School Network](#) is the gateway to online training and development resources. The [GSN](#) has links to all of the University's policies, statements and regulations.

#### **Professional Doctorate Programme Website Link:**

A link to the PD programme can be found on the [Prof Doc programme website](#).

Where key information about the professional doctorate programme are located.

## **Part 1 Research degrees at The Open University**

### **1.1 The Open University**

The Open University is a world leader in modern distance learning, the pioneer of teaching and learning methods that enables people to achieve their career and life goals studying at times and in places to suit them.

It promotes educational opportunity and social justice by providing high-quality university education to anyone who wishes to realise their ambitions and fulfil their potential.

Through academic research, pedagogic innovation and collaborative partnerships, the University is a world leader in the design, content and delivery of supported open learning.

The University's central headquarters is at Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, and it has 4 faculty-aligned Student Recruitment and Support Centres (SRSC's) and national centres located in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Over 1,000 academic and research staff are employed by the University, the majority of whom are based at Walton Hall which is the administrative and operational centre of the University, and where most of the research is undertaken.

The Open University Graduate School launched in October 2016, and is a focal point for research degree community support. It leads on the development of research degree community networks, partnerships and training pathways to support an open, engaged and digitally literate research student community. It promotes wellbeing and personal development and widening access to postgraduate opportunities.

### **1.2 Research degree qualifications**

The University's research degrees are:

- Master of Philosophy (MPhil) (full or part-time)
- Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) (full or part-time)
- Professional Doctorate e.g. Doctorate in Education (EdD) (part-time) and Doctorate in Health and Social Care (DHSC) (part-time).

A thesis for a Professional Doctorate must be a significant contribution to professional knowledge, worthy of publication and demonstrate the ability of the candidate to undertake further research without supervision. In order to be awarded the degree, students must demonstrate that they have met the expectations for the doctoral degree as specified in the [QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications](#) (see Appendix 1A of the [Research Degree Regulations](#)).

### **Taking another research degree**

If a student has been awarded one research degree and wants to take another, they must reapply for admission to the University. The second research programme may build on the work from the first thesis, but the submission for the qualification must contain entirely new material. Clearly indicated references to the contents of the first thesis are permitted.

### **Collaborating organisations**

The University encourages cooperation between educational establishments and industrial, commercial, professional and research establishments for the purposes of research leading to the award of a research degree. This cooperation is intended to:

- encourage outward-looking and relevant research
- extend the student's experience
- give access to a wider range of experience and expertise to assist the student in the development of their project
- be mutually beneficial.

Formal collaboration usually means that the student may use facilities and other resources, provided jointly by the University and the collaborating organisation. The student is expected to be fully integrated into the University's research community, student training and pastoral systems.

A formal letter, confirming the agreed arrangements and giving details of the facilities available and the time to be spent at the collaborating organisation, is submitted to the University at the point of application for registration.

### **1.3 Organisational structure for supporting research students**

Senate retains overall responsibility for the governance and award of research degrees at The Open University. It delegates responsibility for the development of research degree strategy, policy and regulations to the Research Committee and the Research Degrees Committee. Research degree policies, regulations and services for research students are reviewed annually and are aligned with the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#).

#### **Management**

The management of the day to day operation of the research degree programme is the responsibility of the Graduate School and the Faculties.

The Research Degrees Team within the Graduate School fulfils the registry function, providing quality assurance, managing student records and ensuring that student registration and progression is managed in accordance with the University's regulations, policies and legislation.

Research students are recruited into research groups within a School in one of the University faculties or institutes. Where a research project spans more than one School, one school/faculty will take the lead in all administrative matters relating to the registration.

Upon registration, each student will be assigned a supervisor. Further details regarding the role of a supervisor can be found in the [Research Degree Regulations](#).

Information regarding additional support for students from the third party monitor can be found in [Research Degree Regulations](#).

The Associate Dean (Research) or Director of Postgraduate Research Studies has oversight of all research students in their faculty. This person is responsible for ensuring students are supported and progressing well throughout their studies. They work with administrative staff within the faculty who help with the day to day management of the research student journey.

The EdD/DHSC Programme Leaders liaise with the Associate Dean (Research) and the Director of Postgraduate Research Studies about the Professional Doctorate (PD) Programme management and administration. Research degree policy is formulated by the University's Research Degrees Committee, which makes recommendations to Senate through the Research Committee. The Research Degrees Committee includes representatives of the University's faculties and research degree students; one full-time and one part-time.



## 1.4 Administrative arrangements

The PD Programme Assistant A is based in the Faculty and administers the Professional Doctorate programme on a day-to-day basis. This involves dealing with student and supervisor enquiries, setting up and maintaining systems and procedures, organising and arranging residential events, and organising and arranging vivas (email: [WELS-Prof-Docs@open.ac.uk](mailto:WELS-Prof-Docs@open.ac.uk)).

The Research Degrees Team within the Graduate School will be the main point of contact with the University on administrative matters. The Graduate School plays a major role in enhancing the quality of the University's research degree provision and the experience of its research students, and develops and implements policy that is approved through the governance structure. The Graduate School can also provide letters in support of visa applications, transcripts, and stamps for railcard and Oyster card (for transport in London) applications.

The team of Research Degree Student Administrators provides advice and guidance on a wide range of topics at any point before, during or after a student registers. This includes information on registration and fees, payment of grants and expenses, financial support, key points in a student's studies such as upgrade, progress reporting and examination.

The Research Degrees Team within the Graduate School is in the Charles Pinfold building and is open from 8:30 to 17:00, Monday to Thursday and 8:30 to 16:30 on Fridays. The contact details for the Research Degrees Team can be found in [Part 6](#).

The Graduate School is part of the Research, Enterprise and Scholarship unit, which is responsible for the Code of Practice for Research, which sets out the standards that govern the conduct of research at The Open University. The code is available in the Code of Conduct available on the [Research policies website](#).

The Academic Professional Development (APD) team and the Graduate School are responsible for providing the professional development framework for researchers at all stages of their career. The Graduate School organises training to meet the development needs of pre-upgrade students, while APD's focus is on later-stage PGRs, ECRs and academics.

The Academic Strategy Office is responsible for the Code of Conduct for Research, which sets out the standards that govern the conduct of research at The Open University. The code of conduct is available on the [Research plan and policies](#) website.

The Research and Enterprise Office at the Open University is a central office that supports academic staff, research staff and students with their endeavours in seeking external funding for research, and advice on intellectual property assignment and knowledge transfer.

## **1.5 Equality and diversity**

For more than 40 years, The Open University has been promoting social justice and equality of opportunity which is core to our mission and is as important today as it was when The Open University was founded.

The Open University is creating an inclusive university community and a society where:

- people are treated with dignity and respect
- inequalities are challenged
- it anticipates and responds positively to different needs and circumstances.

## **1.6 The Open University's equality and diversity principles**

1. The Open University values diversity and recognises that different people bring different perspectives, ideas, knowledge and culture, and that this difference brings great strength.
2. The Open University believes that discrimination or exclusion based on individual characteristics and circumstances such as age; disability; caring or dependency responsibilities; gender or gender identity; marriage and civil partnership status; political opinion; pregnancy and maternity; race, colour, caste, nationality, ethnic or national origin; religion or belief; sexual orientation; socio-economic background; trade union membership status or other distinctions, represents a waste of talent and a denial of opportunity for self-fulfilment.
3. It is recognised that patterns of under representation and differences in outcomes at The Open University can be challenged through positive action programmes.
4. The Open University respects the rights of individuals, including the right to hold different views and beliefs. The Open University will not allow these differences to be manifested in a way that is hostile or degrading to others.

5. The Open University expects commitment and involvement from all its staff, students, partners and providers of goods and services in working towards the achievement of its vision.

For further details about equality and diversity at The Open University, including its Equality Schemes, please visit the [Equality and Diversity website](#).

## **1.7 Student responsibilities**

Students should:

- treat all members of the University community with dignity and respect for their rights and beliefs
- challenge or report incidents of discrimination and bullying
- respond positively and inclusively to individual differences.

For help or advice with an issue relating to equality and diversity, contact the Graduate School in the first instance. The Research Degree Student Administrators will be pleased to help, and all enquiries will be treated sensitively and confidentially.

Equality and diversity policy enquiries may also be addressed to The Open University Equality and Diversity office (email: [strategy-equality@open.ac.uk](mailto:strategy-equality@open.ac.uk)). The office offers general information and guidance on University equality and diversity policy. However, it cannot normally take an active part in issues of an individual nature concerning cases involving staff or students where these are being handled by existing institutional complaints, appeals or grievance processes.

## Part 2 Essential Information

This section contains essential information for research degree registration with The Open University.

The [Research Degree Regulations](#) should not be read in isolation. It is important they are read in conjunction with other documentation including the University's general regulations, the Conditions of Registration for PGR Students, the Code of Practice for Student Discipline, this handbook, and other relevant documents referred to therein. Below is a non-exhaustive list of the documents that students should refer to:

- [Code of Practice of Research](#)
- [Fee Rules \(Postgraduate Research\) 2021/22](#)
- [Student Privacy Notice](#)
- [Complaints and Appeals Procedure](#)
- [Procedure for Dealing with Allegations of Research Malpractice or Misconduct \(PDF, 126KB\)](#)
- [Code of Practice for Student Discipline](#)
- [Student Computing Policy](#)
- [Open University Student Charter](#)
- [Plagiarism](#)
- [Research Ethics](#)
- [Fitness to Study Policy](#)

The [Research Degree Regulations](#) form part of a student's contract with the University and any questions about them should be addressed to the Graduate School.

## **2.1 Your record and personal data**

### **2.1.1 Personal identifier**

Each student is provided with a 'personal identifier' (PI number) upon registration. Students will be asked to provide this unique PI number whenever they contact the University or complete any forms. Students can access information about their research degree registration on [StudentHome](#).

### **2.1.2 Changing your personal details**

If a student changes their name, address, phone number or email address they must tell the Research Degrees Team in writing or through electronic media Any change of name must be supported by appropriate documentary evidence such as:

- a marriage certificate
- a birth certificate, or
- a deed poll.

Updates to University records for transgender student transitioning to a different gender, may be made upon receipt of a letter explaining that the student intends to undergo gender reassignment. However, the University requires evidence of legal name change before a degree certificate in the preferred name can be issued. Evidence may be in the form of:

- a statutory declaration of name change
- a birth certificate in the new name, or
- a deed poll.

### **2.1.3 The data held by The Open University**

The Open University is committed to the principles of data protection and best practice in handling information. All personal information is held in secure files and will be processed only for the purposes identified at registration.

Within the University, information is transferred only to those who need it for the purposes of academic, administrative and support services. Some information will be sent to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). Information will also be provided to other statutory bodies on request.

Students have the right under the Data Protection Act 1998 to a copy of the personal data the University holds about them and to information about how it is processed. Requests can be made in writing to the Data Protection Coordinator (contact details are in [Part 6](#)). There is a small fee payable to The Open University for this service.

Further information about the use of data can be found in The Open University [Data Protection Policy](#) but note that the policy covers taught students as well as research students so not all of it is relevant to research students.

### **Access to data**

Students can access information about their research degree registration on [StudentHome](#). Once a student has been registered, they will be given an Open University computer username (OUCU) and a pre-set password that allows him/her to access some OU systems, including the PGR Manager system. When a student first signs in to the systems they will be asked to change the pre-set password. It is their responsibility to keep the password secure and confidential. In particular the student must:

- never tell anyone else the password, even University staff
- use the password in line with accepted best practice. Advice on safe and secure computing is given in the [Help Centre](#).

If a student thinks that someone else knows the password, they should tell The Open University Computing Helpdesk by phoning +44 (0)1908 653972.

Students are expected to comply with the [University's Computing Code of Conduct](#).

### **Information and advice on data protection**

The University's Data Protection policy is published on the [Graduate School Network](#).

For more information or advice about data protection matters, please ask the Data Protection Coordinator (contact details are in [Part 6](#)).

#### **2.1.4 Freedom of information**

The University has a Freedom of Information Publication scheme that provides a general right of public access to many types of information. The scheme can be accessed through the [Freedom of Information](#) website.

Information on the Freedom of Information Act 2000 can be obtained from the [Information Commissioner](#).

## **2.2 How The Open University will communicate**

The University keeps electronic records and will usually communicate with students and supervisors by email. During their studies students will be required to complete and submit forms electronically and is uploaded onto the PGR Manager system for endorsement and approval.

[Graduate School Network](#). You will also receive communications from the Professional Doctorate Team via the forums on the PD website. It is therefore important that you subscribe to the programme forums in order to receive programme alerts.

Please contact the Research Degrees Team if you are having difficulty in finding the correct change request on the PGR Manager system. (contact details are in [Part 6](#)). Upon registration you will be issued with a @open.ac.uk email address only and is the only access email address that you can use for the PGR Manager system, external members are given separate access according to their access needs (further information is given as appropriate). All email communications from the University will be sent to this email address or directly from the PGR Manager system and you will need to check it on a regular basis. If you are a member of staff and a student you must use the guidance on the User guide for PGR Manager found on the GSN for access guidance.

## **2.3 Giving feedback**

The Open University reviews the regulations, codes of practice and policies periodically and would welcome any comments. It also welcomes feedback from students regarding any aspect of their time as an Open University research student, including any suggestions and ideas for improvements. Where appropriate, the feedback will be used to make improvements to services for students. Please email the Graduate School (contact details are in [Part 6](#)) with any feedback.

## **2.4 Appeals**

Students can appeal against administrative and academic decisions of the University. Please see [Part 5](#) of this handbook.

## **2.5 Complaints**

For information on the complaints process and the University's Complaints procedure please refer to [Part 5](#) of this handbook.

## **2.6 Public interest disclosure**

The University has a statement setting out its policy on 'whistleblowing' (public interest disclosure). It offers guidance for students and staff who want to raise reasonable suspicions they may have about irregularities in the running of the University or about the activities of colleagues within the University. This statement is not intended to replace the University's other policies and procedures in relation to grievances, harassment, disciplinary matters or students' complaints.

The policy statement is intended to incorporate the requirements of the Public Interest Disclosure Act, January 1998, but is broader in two respects – it applies to students as well as to staff and its scope goes beyond that of protected disclosure as defined in the Act. A copy of the statement can be downloaded from the [Graduate School Network](#).

## **2.7 University regulations and codes of practice**

The [Research Degree Regulations](#) should not be read in isolation. It is important that they are read in conjunction with the University's general regulations, such as the Code of Practice for Student Discipline, this handbook, and other relevant documents referred to both in the regulations and the handbook.

These documents are available through the [Graduate School Network](#).

The [Research Degree Regulations](#) form part of a student's contract with the University. Any questions about the [Research Degree Regulations](#) should be addressed to the Research Degrees Team.

## **2.8 Supervision**

The University's [Research Degree Regulations](#) (regulations specifically for Professional Doctorates, section 4), and Appendix 2 of the regulations; the Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students; set out guidelines for the conduct of the relationship between supervisors and students and serve as a standard for external audits of research degree provision and research degree appeals. The code of practice for supervision can be found in Appendix 2 of the [Research Degree Regulations](#).



The Open University Research Degrees Committee reviews the regulations, codes of practice and policies periodically and would welcome any comments. Please send them to the Research Degrees Team (contact details in [Part 6](#)).

## **2.9 Student registration**

The forms and guidance notes for recording and managing registration are on the [Graduate School Network](#).

### **2.9.1 Registration arrangements**

On admission to the Professional Doctorate programme, a student will be registered for a specific Professional Doctorate, such as the Doctorate in Education or Doctorate in Health and Social Care.

Registration will continue until the submission deadline, provided the student maintains satisfactory academic progress and meets all fee liabilities.

### **2.9.2 Residence requirements**

Registered students may reside anywhere in the world, however they must be available to attend any residential courses in the UK and must attend the final examination in person. There are a number of compulsory residential weekends which will take place in Milton Keynes. The residential weekends form part of the requirement for your research degree and permission not to attend is granted only in exceptional circumstances. For those unable to attend, each weekend will have an alternative learning events.

Please be sure to notify the Research Degrees Team if your address, email address or phone number change at any time during your studies. This includes temporary residence elsewhere in the UK or overseas for the purpose of field trips. Failure to provide your current address and phone numbers is a breach of the terms and conditions of your registration.

### **2.9.3 Other study**

The University supports research students undertaking supplementary study related to their research degree. A student would require approval of the Graduate School Director on the recommendation of the faculty before registering for any additional study.

A student may not study for any other degree or qualification at The Open University or any other institution at the same time as undertaking research degree study.

#### **2.9.4 Study hours**

Students are required to spend a minimum of 18.5 hours per week on their studies throughout their registration period.

#### **2.9.5 Study periods**

Students start on the 1st October.

The minimum period of study before submission of the thesis is four years. The maximum period of registration is eight years.

In order to study for a degree, submit a thesis for examination and be awarded the degree, a student must be a registered research student of the University. Should registration lapse prior to submission, the student will be deemed to have withdrawn from the research degree programme. Any research or other work undertaken before registration as a research student cannot count as part of the minimum period of study required before the submission of a thesis for the award of a research degree and may not be included in the thesis.

#### **2.9.6 Absences and other disruptions**

A student must inform their supervisors and the Research Degrees Team in the Graduate School if they are absent, or if their studies are disrupted for any reason including illness or injury for a week or more and a study break request should be submitted as soon as possible thereafter. A student who knows in advance that they are going to be absent for a month or more should request a study break ahead of time on the PGR Manager system. Overly late requests for study break are not assured.

Supervisors and Associate Deans (Research)/ Deputy Associate Deans/Directors of Postgraduate Studies are required to notify the Research Degrees Team in the Graduate School of any unauthorised absences or if they have concerns about disruptions to a student's attendance or progress.

All information disclosed will be treated confidentially and sensitively.

#### **2.9.7 Study Break**

A student may submit a request for a study break to the Graduate School Director for consideration. This can be done using a study break change request form available on the PGR Manager system. Study break is not an automatic right. Any request must be submitted together with the supporting evidence.

Where possible, such requests should be made in advance. Where this is not possible they should, as soon as they become aware of an incident that is likely to lead to the submission of a request for a study break, inform the Associate Dean Research (or delegate) and the Research Degrees Team. The completed online application should be submitted as soon as possible thereafter. Overly late requests will not be considered.

Part-time students may request a maximum of 24 months study break. Study breaks will normally only be approved by the Graduate School Director 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.

A student may request a study break on the following grounds:

- Certified serious ill health of the student or a family member or dependent for whom the student is acting as a carer.
- Work related difficulties.
- Domestic commitments.
- Internship or placement.

Students requesting a study break after the submission of their thesis may only do so in exceptional circumstances.

Students wishing to have a break in study on the grounds of ill health, must provide a medical certificate.

Students requiring longer than the maximum permitted period of study break will have to withdraw from their programme of study.

Periods of study break do not count towards the maximum permitted periods of study. If a study break is approved the submission deadline will be extended accordingly and the University will confirm the revised deadline in writing.

### **2.9.8 Maternity, paternity and adoption leave**

Self-funded students are not entitled to maternity pay but may take maternity, paternity or adoption leave. A study break change request can be uploaded onto the PGR Manager system for approval. Details of maternity, paternity and adoption leave are available on the Graduate School Network ([Forms and Guidance](#)).

### **2.9.9 Extension of registration**

In exceptional circumstances a student may extend their registration in accordance with section 9 of the [Research Degree Regulations](#) though extensions to registration are not an automatic right. Where study has been disrupted students are expected to have requested a study break at the point of need. Students and supervisors are responsible for managing the research within the registration time frames and for flagging any issues to the Graduate School in a timely fashion.

### **2.9.10 Withdrawal**

Students who are considering withdrawing from their research degree should contact their supervisors in the first instance to discuss options.

Where a student decides to withdraw, the supervisor or student will need to submit a withdrawal request and input it onto the PGR Manager system under change requests, withdrawals where they are reviewed by the Graduate School Director for approval.

Students who allow their registration to lapse without having submitted their thesis, or fail to return from a period of study break, will be deemed to have withdrawn from their research degree registration.

New students who accept a place on the programme but withdraw before their start date, will receive a full refund of any fees paid. For students in receipt of a grant, further payments will be stopped once appropriate notification has been received from the faculty.

### **2.9.11 Assignment of intellectual property rights (IPRs)**

Intellectual property law aims to safeguard intellectual property creators by warranting them certain time-limited rights to control and use their creations. IPR's can be registered, in the form of, designs (registered and unregistered), patents and trademarks.

The distinction between the four categories is defined below:

- Copyright: protects material such as literature, art, music, sound recordings, films and broadcasts and computer programmes; it is an automatic right which does not need registration at the Patent Office.
- Designs: protect the visual appearance or eye appeal of products.
- Patents: protect the technical and functional aspects of products and processes.
- Trademarks: protect signs that can distinguish the goods and services of one trader from those of another.

Whilst Copyright is protected on creation, designs, patents and trademarks need to be registered at a national Intellectual Property Office.

Registered and un-registered IPR's are an important tool in using and exploiting research activities, as they can be transferred, sold, assigned or waived, allowing others to use the work but at the same time protecting the creators.

### **2.9.12 Postgraduate research student IP policy**

Research students are required to assign any IPR's arising from their research to The Open University. This includes:

- original inventions, design rights and copyright in all materials (written, broadcast, recorded, computer programs, research information on Open University websites, iTunes, videos and any other form of storage device) produced during the course of an Open University studentship or in work specifically assigned to a student.

Research IP that is excluded is as follows:

- copyright in books that are not part of a University course
- copyright in journal articles, and thesis work
- copyright in conference papers
- copyright in presentations
- students' personal notes (excluding laboratory notebooks)

- copyright in software, databases and questionnaires is owned by The Open University and should not be included in research papers / books, where the intention is to assign IP rights to a third party (i.e. publisher). Contact the Enterprise Office before any action is taken.

If the research is sponsored by a third party at the start of any collaboration, contractual arrangements must be in place to define The Open University's position on research IPR's before work commences. Such arrangement might involve third party ownership of IP arising from the research, and therefore students must assign the IP to The Open University so that it can comply with such terms.

For more information about IP with (regards to research only), contact the Research and Enterprise Office. Contact details for the Research and Enterprise Office can be found in [Part 6](#).

### **2.9.13 Copyrighted material owned by a third party**

It is the responsibility of the student to ensure any copyrighted material owned by a third party has been cleared (i.e. permission to make it available on open access websites secured) prior to depositing the thesis in Open Research Online. More information on third party copyright can be found at [Copyright and your thesis | Library Research Support \(open.ac.uk\)](#)

## **2.10 Fees**

### **2.10.1 Fees**

The Fee Rules (Postgraduate Research) 21/22 which includes information on sources of financial support can be found at [Fee Rules](#) All students should read the policy prior to registration.

The university will provide reasonable notice of any changes to the policy and the date that they will take effect.

From 2018, the UK government has introduced loans of up to £25,700, for study of doctoral programmes. The loans will provide a contribution towards the cost of study but they will not cover the full fees and living costs. Full details of the product and the eligibility criteria are available on the [Graduate School Network](#).

## **2.11 Failure to pay fees and charges**

### **2.11.1 Refusal of registration**

A student who fails to pay fees or provide an approved payment method at the time of registration, will not be registered.

### **2.11.2 Cancellation of registration for non-payment of fees**

Please refer to the Fee Rules (Postgraduate Research) 21/22 which includes information on sources of financial support can be found at [Fee Rules](#) All students should read the policy prior to registration.

The university will provide reasonable notice of any changes to the policy and the date that they will take effect.

From 2018, the UK government has introduced loans of up to £25,700, for study of doctoral programmes. The loans will provide a contribution towards the cost of study but they will not cover the full fees and living costs. Full details of the product and the eligibility criteria are available on the [Graduate School Network](#).

## **2.12 Financial support**

### **2.12.1 Support for study related costs**

Please contact the Research Degrees Team for more information.

### **2.12.2 OUSET fund**

The Open University's Students' Association has made a sum available from The Open University Students' Educational Trust to provide financial support for directly supported postgraduate research students. The fund is available to full-time and part-time directly supported research students (who are not a member of Open University staff in receipt of a fee waiver); who are experiencing unforeseen financial hardship. While applicants must be resident in the United Kingdom, there is no citizenship restriction; UK and non-UK citizens are equally eligible to apply. Further information can be found from the [OU Students Association](#).

### **2.12.3 Crowther Fund (Open University graduates only)**

The Crowther Fund was set up as a tribute to the late Lord Crowther, the first Chancellor of The Open University. It is intended to help Open University graduates build upon their Open University degrees, either by formal study or research or by generally broadening their experience through a period of voluntary work.

The closing date for award applications is 28 February each year.

For further details on eligibility criteria students can download an application form and guidance notes on the [Fees and Funding website](#).

### **2.12.4 Beavers Fund**

Additional funds were also donated by the late Dr Robert Beevers, one of The Open University's "founding fathers". Open University honours graduates can apply for funding to undertake research towards an Open University research degree from the Robert Beevers Memorial Fund. An award from this fund can be used for payment towards fees or study related costs such as books or travel.

The fund is administered via The Crowther Fund. For further information see the [Fees and Funding website](#). The closing date for award applications is 26 February each year.

### **2.12.5 Disabled Students' Allowances**

Disabled Students' Allowances are government grants for students in higher education who are obliged to incur additional study-related costs because of a disability, mental health condition or specific learning difficulty.

DSAs are not means tested and are not dependent upon income or any savings that the student may have. If a student is eligible for a DSA it will not affect any state benefits the student may be receiving. A student may still be eligible for a DSA if they are studying part time.

Where a student gets their DSA from will depend on several factors including where the student lives, when they started their qualification and whether they have received DSA support before. A student can find out whether they are eligible for a DSA and find out where to apply by visiting: [disability support information](#).



### **2.12.6 Students in Scotland**

To determine eligibility and to apply for a DSA students based in Scotland should either email: [scotland@open.ac.uk](mailto:scotland@open.ac.uk) or phone the University's Disability and Additional Requirements Team on +44 (0)131 226 3851 (Monday to Friday 08:30 to 17:00 GMT).

### **2.12.7 Research Training Support Grants**

Funds for Research Training Support are available from the faculties. Please note self-funded students or students on staff-fee waivers are not included in this grant.

## **Part 3 Facilities and services**

How to access the research facilities and support services available as a student.

Arrangements for access to research facilities should have been agreed prior to offer and acceptance. If requirements change upon registration the student should contact the faculty to discuss possible alternative arrangements.

### **3.1 Library facilities and services**

Open University research students will need to make use of library resources as part of the research project. Library Services at The Open University provides students with access to high quality and trusted resources that will support the research by enabling the student to explore and keep up-to-date with the subject and undertake a structured literature review.

They include primary and secondary resources such as:

- academic journals
- newspapers
- academic books.

The Library also provides access to specialist resources e.g. statistical databases, legislation, conference proceedings and datasets.

The Open University Library's collection of resources is available from the [online library](#).

The [document delivery service and inter-lending library service](#) provides access to items that are not available in the Library's online and print collections.

[Reference management tools](#) enable you to store and organise your references and automatically generate in-text citations and bibliographies in a variety of styles.

Library Services offers a programme of [online training sessions](#) which is open to all students. This includes an introduction to Library Services and Smarter searching with Library databases.

There is also a programme of face-to-face training and online training for research students. Details can be found via the [Graduate School Network](#).

The Open University's open-access database of peer-reviewed research publications, [Open Research Online](#) (ORO), shows the range and depth of recently published Open University research. Research students are required to upload an electronic copy of their [thesis](#) to ORO and are encouraged to [deposit](#) their publications. The Library Services Research Support team can give advice and guidance on where to publish, and dissemination of publications, email [library-research-support@open.ac.uk](mailto:library-research-support@open.ac.uk).

Doctorate projects can create large amounts of research data, and this may be the student's first experience of working with data on a large scale. The Library Research Support team provide advice, guidance and support in the [management of research data](#).

[Open Research Data Online](#) (ORDO) is The Open University's research data repository.

[EThOS](#), a service from the British Library, provides free online access to a large selection of UK PhD theses from participating universities. [ORO](#) provides access to a growing collection of Open University-awarded theses. These will give an insight into the structure of theses, different approaches to research, and how to develop a thesis. More information about the library services and resources available for research students can be found on the [online library](#).

### **3.1.1 Using the Library at Walton Hall**

The Open University Library provides a modern, spacious environment for study, research and collaboration.

### **3.1.2 Access to other libraries**

Library Services is a member of [SCONUL Access](#) which enables access to, and borrowing of, books at other libraries which belong to the scheme. The scheme covers most of the university libraries in the UK and some in Ireland. The [Libraries near you](#) webpage also give details of access to other libraries.

### **3.1.3 Managing research data**

The Library offers an enquiry service and training on all aspects of data management, a data storage service for secure storage of both live research data and material the student would like to keep available for the longer term.

### **3.1.4 Getting help**

The [Library Helpdesk](#), which provides specialist information advice, is available to support students with all library needs, seven days a week. The helpdesk contact details can be found on every page of the Library website. An out-of-hours webchat service is also provided to support students when the main helpdesk is closed.

For enquiries about Open Research Online and Research Data Management please contact the library research support team: [library-research-support@open.ac.uk](mailto:library-research-support@open.ac.uk).

### **3.1.5 Conditions for use of Library facilities**

Access to the University's Library Services described above requires students to be bound by a [copyright declaration](#).

## **3.2 Computers**

### **3.2.1 Computer networking**

An essential feature of the Professional Doctorate programmes is the extensive use of a dedicated virtual learning environment that will provide:

- electronic communication with supervisors, other students, and members of the Professional Doctorate Team
- online seminars through a discussion forum
- online access to The Open University Library bibliographic databases, eBooks and electronic journals (see [Part 3](#)).

A student will need to purchase, or have regular access to, a suitable computer and must be familiar with the computer before they start. More information about computing can be found in the [Help Centre](#).

Students will also need to register with an internet service provider (ISP) to gain access to the internet and to the University's virtual learning environment.

Once a student has been registered, they will be given an Open University computer username (OUCU) and a pre-set password that allows them to access some OU systems. When a student first signs on to the systems they will be asked to change the pre-set password. It is their responsibility to keep the password secure and confidential. In particular the student must:

- never tell anyone else the password, even University staff
- use the password in line with accepted best practice. Advice on safe and secure computing is given in the [Help Centre](#).

If a student thinks that someone else knows the password, they should tell The Open University Computing Helpdesk by phoning +44 (0)1908 653972.

Students are expected to comply with the University's Computing Code of Conduct, which is published on the [Graduate School Network](#).

### **3.3 Statistics Advisory Services**

Advice about statistical aspects of research is available to all registered Open University research students from the Statistics Advisory Service. A major aim of the service is to encourage students to learn to deal with the statistical aspects of their research effectively and efficiently, by providing statistical advice both at the planning and at the data analysis stages of research. At the planning stage statistical advice can help to:

- ensure that the research study is efficient from the point of data collection through to completion and beyond, and that the design enables the student to address the research objectives
- identify best practices for data management.

At the data analysis stage the service can help to:

- identify suitable statistical methods to properly address the research objectives
- understand outputs from statistical computing software
- ensure that evidence-based conclusions can be drawn from the analysis.

Students are advised to seek statistical advice as early as possible, preferably while planning the study and before collecting the data. Please visit the [Statistics Advisory Service](#) website for details or email: [stats-advisory@open.ac.uk](mailto:stats-advisory@open.ac.uk).

### **3.4 Health and safety**

The Open University is committed to ensuring the health, safety and welfare of all those involved in the discharge of its undertakings, both within its designated premises and at external locations. Risk assessment is one of the main tools used in order to ensure adequate control measures are in place to manage the safety of individuals, and is of particular importance when considering higher risk activities/environments such as laboratories or fieldwork.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 requires risk assessments to be completed to identify significant risks. The assessment must:

- identify significant hazards
- decide who might be harmed e.g. students, and how they might be harmed
- evaluate the risks arising from hazards and decide if existing precautions are adequate or if more are needed
- record the significant findings if five or more people are employed
- review the assessment from time to time especially after a significant change or if there is reason to believe it is no longer valid and revise as necessary.

Risk assessments must be completed with supervisors prior to work/travel commencing. Any significant risks identified must be documented and the associated control measures identified. This may then require follow up with a documented Safe system of Work/Method statement. All of this information must be formally communicated to the students in order to provide them with the relevant information and instruction to allow them to work safely in their particular environment ensuring the safety of both themselves and those around them.

The Open University laboratories are covered by a Safety Code of Practice which applies to all users, including students and their internal supervisors. Those responsible for the laboratories are responsible for ensuring that all users have been informed of the Code of Practice and the requirement to follow it.

The University has a specific duty under The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH) to prevent exposure to substances hazardous to health or, if prevention is not reasonably practicable, to undertake an assessment to adequately control exposure. No work shall be commenced involving any activity likely to be hazardous to health until a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks has been carried out. This process will identify the measures required to control any activity involving the potential to pose a hazard to health.

Students and supervisors are formally responsible for ensuring that a written COSHH assessment is prepared for all experiments involving the use of substances conducted within The Open University, at a host institution or in an external environment. They are expected to be familiar with, and ensure compliance with safety regulations applying to any laboratory and/or equipment used as well as the COSHH 2002 Regulations.

More information is available at [Health and Safety Executive](#) and also at the [Open University Health and Safety website](#).

The Open University also requires risk assessment to be produced where fieldwork and international travel are involved. Guidance is available on both the Health and Safety intranet above and on the [People Services website](#). It is standard practice within the Open University to consult the [Foreign Office](#) website where international travel is involved as part of the travel Risk Assessment.

### **3.5 Studying with a disability or additional need**

The University is creating an inclusive University community and welcomes as research students people with disabilities or other requirements.

Whether a student is studying full-time on campus or as a part-time student using their own research facilities, the University responds positively to the different needs and circumstances of the students. Where possible, The University will, for example:

- 1) make reasonable adjustments that may be required for students with a disability, health condition, mental health difficulty or specific learning difficulty (such as dyslexia); and

- 2) make reasonable accommodation for students with other requirements such as:
  - a) pregnant or breastfeeding students
  - b) students who have specific needs related to their religion or belief o students who are transitioning to a different gender o students who have caring or dependency responsibilities.

The student should inform The University as early as possible if support is needed as some services may take several months to arrange. The information the student provides will be used only to help the University to assist them in their studies.

### **3.5.1 Referral process**

If the student has a disability or additional needs they should discuss with their supervisor how these might impact on their studies and inform the Graduate School. Any information that they disclose will be confidential.

Some adjustments can be made immediately, such as making changes to the student's workstation, arranging meetings in particular rooms to take account of sensitivity to sound or light levels, producing printed information in large format, for example.

If the student is likely to need equipment, personnel or services to support them, The University will ask them to apply for a Disabled Students' Allowance (Please see the [Fees policy](#)) to help with any costs arising from meeting their needs. Assuming they are eligible, the student will undergo an assessment and The University will discuss the recommendations with the student. The University will make reasonable adjustments to enable the student to study and The University will do so in consultation with the student, the School and Faculty.

If the student is not eligible for a DSA, the University may still be able to provide equipment, personnel and support – the Graduate School will liaise with the student, the student's supervisor and Academic Services to discuss how best to support the student.

### **3.6 Participating in Open University life**

The Open University Students Association is here to provide a voice for all OU students and provide a vibrant community to support you during your studies. All students are automatically a member of the Association and there are plenty of ways to get involved.

### 3.6.1 Student community

The Students Association exists to represent students and to ensure The Open University is more than just a place of learning – it's a student community. The Association has vibrant communities on:

- [Facebook](#) @OUstudents
- [Twitter](#) @OUstudents
- [Instagram](#) @OUstudentslive
- [A suite of online forums](#)

#### Societies

Over 20 student-led [societies](#) are currently affiliated to the Association. From psychology to bell ringing – there's something for everyone and staff are welcome too! More recently we've also begun encouraging students to set up more informal, common interest groups that we call [Clubs](#).

Our [Community team](#) are the best people to contact if you're interested in meeting other postgrads at events or as part of the Postgraduate Students Society.

#### Meet OU students

Local coffee mornings and pub meet-ups are being organised by OU students across the country. They are a great way to find out more about the Association and meet new friends. Find the [latest events](#) on our website or why not contact us and we can help you set up your own Meet-up?

### 3.6.2 Student voice

The Association enables students to influence how the University is run by representing the collective needs of OU students. The OU Students Association provides many different routes for research students to be involved in student voice activity and have their voice heard. You can apply to be a [student member of an OU research committee](#).

There are many other ways to shape the work of both the Students Association and The Open University and every two years, you have the opportunity to stand for election to become part of our [student leadership team](#).

For other volunteer roles check out the [volunteering](#) pages of oustudents.com.



### **3.6.3 Student support**

Studying can be hard, and we know that OU students have a lot of commitments to juggle as well as study. Sometimes you need an extra bit of support to help you along your academic journey. The Association offers a variety of support services and works with external support providers to help you. To complement the University's support services, we offer the following:

#### **Peer Support**

Our [Peer Supporters](#) can offer some informal support or answer one off questions for students who are struggling with their studies.

#### **Disabled Students Group – Student Support Group**

The [Disabled Students Group](#) are a support group for students with additional challenges that affect their studies. They support each other to attain their individual study goals through closed online forums and a variety of other closed social media platforms.

#### **PLEXUS – LGBT+ Support Group**

PLEXUS is the OU Students Association LGBT+ group. It is open to all students, whether they self-define as LGBT+ or are an ally of the LGBT+ community. PLEXUS provides a 'safe space' for members, with a tiered membership system which is designed to provide specific support and comfort for LGBT+ students. For more information, visit the [PLEXUS website](#).

#### **Shop and Discounts**

Our [OU Students Shop](#) sells a wide range of OU-branded clothing and merchandise.

OU students are eligible for a [TOTUM](#) card which gives you access to a wide range of discounts in the UK and abroad.

#### **Open University Students Educational Trust**

The Association's own students' charity helps students who are in financial need continue their studies. You can find out about [eligibility and how to apply on our website](#).

## **Volunteering**

There are a variety of [volunteering opportunities](#) available – whether you've got a lot of time spare or just a few hours. It's a great way to gain new skills and experiences, improve your CV and meet new people. Roles range from online roles such as Forum Moderators and Library Study Volunteers, to student facing ones such as Meet-up Hosts and Graduation Volunteers, to representative roles such as Central Committee Representatives and members of the student leadership team!

## **STUDIO**

Keep up-to-date with all things OU by listening to our STUDIO radio shows. Our team of hosts come from all walks of life and discuss issues important to distance learners. Like us on [Facebook](#), where you can listen to the next show!

## **The Open University Alumni Association**

Joining The Open University is the beginning of a lifelong relationship. Even when not studying an OU qualification holder remains part of a vibrant learning community through The Open University Alumni Association, set up by the University and staffed by a professional team. All graduates (and everyone who has successfully completed an Open University qualification) have automatic free membership of the association.

Members will be sent communications including the regular email newsletter OpenNews which contains the latest Open University developments. Members will also have access to the [association's website](#) with access to information on new courses, supporting The Open University, OpenLearn, The Open University on iTunes U and YouTube, member benefits, careers advice, updating personal details and various social networking sites including Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

All that's needed is the student's OUCU and password (if these have been lost or forgotten, please contact the alumni team below). Users will be able to access the site, set up groups, contribute in the forum areas, write blogs or simply look around at what's on offer.

To contact the team, please send the enquiry with name, address and Open University personal identifier to:

Alumni Relations  
The Open University  
Walton Hall  
Milton Keynes  
MK7 6AA,

Phone +44 (0)1908 653815

Email [alumni@open.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@open.ac.uk)

[www.open.ac.uk/alumni](http://www.open.ac.uk/alumni)

### **Association of Open University Graduates (AOUG)**

The Association of Open University Graduates offers graduates the opportunity to keep in touch with other like-minded graduates with similar experiences. It is an independent, subscription-funded Association run by Open University graduates for Open University graduates. Members can maintain their links, while fostering new ones, and stay connected with The Open University. AOUG supports The Open University by giving awards to research students in faculties and research centres and to new graduates in each region and nation.

Members' benefits include:

- opportunities to network with Open University graduates in the UK and internationally
- a website and forum, Facebook and Twitter, AOUG's magazine OMEGA and local e-newsletters
- academic and social events including meetings, trips and weekends away.

To find out more, visit [AOUG](#) or contact the AOUG office

Association of Open University Graduates  
The Open University  
Walton Hall  
Milton Keynes  
MK7 6AA

Tel: +44(0)1908 653316

Email: [aoug@open.ac.uk](mailto:aoug@open.ac.uk).

## **Part 4 Exams, Awards, Ceremonies and Support**

### **4.1 Examination**

#### **4.1.1 Eligibility**

To be eligible to submit an EdD/DHSC thesis a student must:

- be registered for the EdD/DHSC (the student must not have passed their maximum registration date) and passed their minimum registration period
- have satisfactorily completed the study requirements
- have satisfied their supervisors and the PD Team that the thesis is of an adequate standard for submission to examiners. (Please refer PD in the regulations.15 for details [Research Degree Regulations](#))
- have paid all fees due.

The following apply:

- Year 1 and 2 – summative assignments are assessed by two independent assessors. Feedback on summative assignments is given to the Research Degrees Office and a copy is sent to the student and their supervisor(s).
- Year 4+ –examiner(s) will examine the thesis and provide a report for the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee on the basis of their assessment of the thesis and the defence of the thesis at the viva.

#### **4.1.2 Thesis submission**

Section PD.17 of the [Research Degree Regulations](#) provide detailed information as to what is required for thesis submission. Additional information is provided in The Open University Thesis Submission Guidelines which are available on the [Graduate School Network](#).

Theses can be submitted at any time during the year, although those submitted during the summer may be subject to some delay if examiners are not available for oral examinations.

When the notice to submit is received, normally in advance of submission by three months, the supervisors will nominate an exam panel which is assessed by the Associate Dean (Research) (or delegate) and if meets the criteria will be submitted to the Research Degrees Committee for approval. A minimum of two examiners is required.

An Independent Examination Panel Chair will also be appointed. It is their role to make the examination arrangements and to ensure that the examination is run in accordance with the University's regulations, policies and procedures. Once the examination arrangements are finalised, confirmation of the date, time and place of the viva will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.

#### **4.1.3 Examination**

Section PD.17 of the [Research Degree Regulations](#) provide detailed information as to what is required during the examination process. Additional information is provided in the Examination Guidelines which are available on the [Graduate School Network](#).

Students and supervisors should read the Regulations and the guidelines carefully. These include information on publication of papers, originality and joint work and the length and format of the thesis and any non-book components. The thesis must take the form of a coherent and cohesive monograph. Any additional material e.g. non-book component, or appendices including publications, data etc. 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 student is required to attend the examination in person and defend the thesis to the examiners. A supervisor may be present as an observer at the oral examination. Invitation to attend is at the student's discretion and should form part of the Examination Panel Nomination process.

#### **4.1.4 Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is using the work (including text, images and ideas) of other people to gain some form of benefit without formally acknowledging that the work came from someone else. The Open University takes allegations of plagiarism very seriously and is making increasing use of plagiarism detection software.

It is expected that a student develops and maintains best practice in their writing throughout the research and undertakes plagiarism training. In cases of suspected plagiarism, the university will follow the 'Procedure of dealing with allegations of academic misconduct and malpractice'. The plagiarism policy and the disciplinary procedures can be found in the forms and guidance section (A-Z) on the [Graduate School Network](#).

The student will be asked to acknowledge a statement to confirm that all the work submitted is their own before submitting the thesis for examination.

#### **4.1.5 Results Approval**

The examiners will normally advise the student of the recommendation at the end of the examination. At this stage the outcome is only a recommendation. The recommendation must be approved by the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee (RDRAC). At this point the Committee will confirm the outcome of the examination in writing.

Where further amendments are needed in order to meet the academic requirements of the award, the student will be informed in writing as to what is required. Students will continue to receive advice from supervisors whilst undertaking any corrections and amendments. Details are outlined in section PD.17 of the [Research Degree Regulations](#).

#### **4.2 Award of degrees**

If no corrections are required, the degree is awarded with effect from the date the examiners recommendations are approved by RDRAC. Where post-examination corrections are required, the date of the degree awarded will correspond to the date that the examiners approve the corrected thesis.

When RDRAC confirms that the thesis meets the requirements for the award of a degree, the student must submit an electronic copy (see [The Open University Thesis Submission Guidelines](#)) before the degree can be conferred. The degree and title of Doctor or Master of Philosophy, or Doctor of Education/Doctor of Health and Social Care are conferred in absentia by Congregation. The student will receive confirmation in writing of completion of the degree. At this point the student may use the title 'Dr' if awarded a Doctor of Philosophy, Doctor of Education or Doctor of Health and Social Care.

#### **4.3 Degree ceremonies**

The University holds an annual series of degree ceremonies for the presentation of graduates.

These are held in March to June and September to November in towns and cities across the UK. Graduates are presented to the Chancellor, the Pro-Chancellor, the Vice-Chancellor or one of the Pro-Vice-Chancellors or Executive Deans. The student may, if they wish, be presented at one of these degree ceremonies. They are always memorable and inspiring occasions. Details will be sent to the student when they become eligible.

More information about degree ceremonies can be obtained from the [Ceremonies](#) website or by contacting the Ceremonies Centre. Contact details are in [Part 6](#). Information about the accessibility of each venue and hiring academic dress at the ceremony is also available on the ceremonies website or by contacting the Ceremonies Centre.

#### **4.4 Directory of graduates**

The names of graduates attending each degree ceremony are produced and handed out as souvenir publications on the day of the ceremony. A full listing of all of the year's graduates is also compiled by the university but is not available in printed format. These lists are all public documents. The university may also release names of graduates to be printed in national or regional newspapers and other publications.

A student who does not wish their name to appear in any of these publications must tell the university by writing to the Manager in the Ceremonies Centre.

**Unless such notification is received the university will consider that it has consent to include a student's name.**

#### **4.5 What a student should do if they need help**

Throughout a student's studies, the University strives to give the best support and guidance, to help them towards successful completion of the degree.

The University understands that sometimes a student may fall behind or have unexpected disruptions to their studies. Illness, bereavement, changes in domestic circumstances and financial difficulties can all impact on ability to study. A student may also find that the project is not progressing as well as hoped, or something has gone wrong with the data collection. Whatever the reason, a student should talk to their supervisor or third party monitor about the difficulties. The supervisor(s)/third party monitor will help the student to find a way through the immediate problem and can sometimes renegotiate deadlines or ask for a period of suspended registration. The student may also address concerns to the Area Lead/Programme Leaders/Faculty Director Research Degrees or Associate Dean (Research) depending on the structure of the faculty.

If a student needs help because they feel a process has gone wrong, they may want to appeal against an academic or administrative decision or complain about a service, please see [Part 5](#) of this handbook covering appeals and complaints.

The University is committed to providing a high-quality service and will seek to resolve any problems as quickly as possible. The University considers all feedback to be an important source of information for improving services.

Students who need or wish to may contact the Research Degrees Team directly. Contact details can be found in [Part 6](#).



## **Part 5 Research degree complaints and appeals**

The Open University aims to provide all students with an excellent learning experience that enables them to achieve their academic goals. We recognise that sometimes things go wrong and, when they do, we welcome the opportunity to put them right as soon as possible.

The Student Complaints and Appeals Procedures apply to all enquirers, applicants and research students. Students can obtain this procedure in alternative formats and seek help, advice and guidance on making a formal complaint or appeal from the [Complaints and Appeals](#) area of the Help Centre, the [Graduate School Network](#) and from either the [Student Casework Office](#) or the Graduate School.

### **5.1 Administrative Appeals**

The University defines an administrative appeal as ‘a request for a review of a decision taken by an individual or body charged with making decisions about any aspect of a student’s access to learning or learning experience with the University which is not an academic decision’.

Decisions about registration processes, fee liability, financial support, exceptional arrangements and reasonable adjustment which are not academic in nature are covered by the Administrative Appeals Procedure.

More information on administrative appeals can be found in the [Help Centre](#).

### **5.2 Academic Appeals**

The University defines an academic appeal as ‘a request for a review of a decision of an academic body charged with making decisions on admission, assessment, student progression and awards’.

Decisions about entry requirements, reasonable adjustments for assessment for students with disabilities, progression rules, academic misconduct, thesis submission and the award of qualifications would be covered by the Academic Appeals Procedure.

More information on academic appeals can be found in the [Help Centre](#).

### **5.3 Complaints**

The University defines a complaint as ‘an oral or written expression of dissatisfaction concerning the provision of a programme of study or related academic or administrative service, which is not an appeal against a decision’.

Concerns about the provision of a service or facility or the failure to provide a service or facility, where the standard of the service or facility has fallen below the standard that might reasonably be expected or where there is a reasonable expectation that the service or facility would be provided would be covered by the Complaints Procedure.

More information on the complaints procedure can be found in the [Help Centre](#).

### **5.4 Sources of advice**

Advice is available from:

#### **The Research Degrees Team**

The Open University

Milton Keynes

MK7 6AA

Phone +44(0)1908 653806

Email [research-degrees-office@open.ac.uk](mailto:research-degrees-office@open.ac.uk)

#### **The Student Casework Office**

The Open University

PO Box 5155

Milton Keynes

MK7 6YJ

Phone +44(0)1908 659535

Fax +44 (0)1908 659536

Email [studentcaseworkoffice@open.ac.uk](mailto:studentcaseworkoffice@open.ac.uk)

#### **The Open University Students' Association**

Central office at Walton Hall, Milton Keynes

Email [ousa@student.open.ac.uk](mailto:ousa@student.open.ac.uk)

## **The Office of the Independent Adjudicator**

Second Floor  
Abbey Gate  
57 – 75 Kings Road  
Reading  
RG1 3AB  
[www.oiahe.org.uk](http://www.oiahe.org.uk)

Casework Support Team: +44 (0)118 959 9813  
(Calls to and from this office may be monitored for quality control and training reasons)

### **5.5 Other policies and statements**

A student can access the University's other regulations, policies and statements on the [Student Policies and Regulations](#) website.

All policies and statements relevant to research students can be found on the [Graduate School Network](#).

### **5.6 The Open University's Research Degrees Supervision Policy**

This policy sets out the University's expectations and requirements for Postgraduate Research Student (PGRS) supervision; it applies to MPhil, PhD and Professional Doctorate students directly registered and those who are registered through the Affiliated Research Centre programme.

Supervision of postgraduate research students is considered to be an integral and valued aspect of the academic role. It requires ongoing development and reflection in line with departmental, faculty and Open University policies.

The policy adheres to the University's equality and diversity principles; it recognises and values diversity of individual students and supervisors. Equally, the policy recognises diversity of arrangements within disciplines. The purpose of the policy is to provide an environment in which research degree supervision takes place in a supportive, enabling and effective way for all but which articulates a set of minimum expectations for all supervisory arrangements.

### **5.6.1 Appointment of supervisors**

Faculties, institutes and ARCs are required to have clear and consistent processes for the eligibility and appointment of supervisors. The requirements for the appointment of the supervision team is found in the Research Degrees EdD/Professional Doctorates Regulations PD.4.1 [Research Degree Regulations](#)

### **5.6.2 Supporting students**

The level and type of support required by students varies during their studies and across Institutes/Faculties/Disciplines. Arrangements between research students and supervisors may be kept flexible, as long as the team and the Programme Leaders are satisfied that adequate support is being provided for the research student and that progress is formally monitored (which on the professional doctorate is primarily done via the submission of assignments). However, there will be an expected minimum contact.

The style and approach to supervision will vary by discipline and by the individual needs of the student and supervisors. Part-time students should normally have five formal supervision meetings as a minimum in an academic year, ideally with one supervision meeting face-to-face. The residential weekends will provide an opportunity for face-to-face meetings. Formal means that the meeting is scheduled and that there are jointly agreed notes of the meeting, and with an agenda.

Subject to this agreed minimum, the frequency of supervision meetings will vary during the course of a student's research programme especially at key times such as: during the first months of the PD, prior to the Summertime Assignment; and approaching thesis submission. Supervisors may also choose to schedule additional meetings with students to help meet their individual learning needs.

Supervision in teams enables short absences to be managed by the supervisory team in consultation with the Head of School or line manager as necessary. Where there is a significant absence of a supervisor alternative support needs to be provided. An absence of over three months requires provision of alternative arrangements agreed within faculty and institute or ARC.

Where supervisors have been on extended leave, discussions about the viability of returning to supervisory team need to take place. The decision is made based on student need, the stage of the student's studies and the supervisory team.

### **5.6.3 Supporting supervisors**

This policy recognises that research degree supervision is a process that requires a thorough induction and continued ongoing professional development.

Faculties, Institutes and ARCs are responsible for allocating sufficient time for supervisors to carry out the duties required for quality supervision and support of students.

Supervisors are required to undertake initial training within the first 6-12 months of beginning the role within the University or ARC. This includes experienced supervisors who are new to the University as well as newly qualified supervisors.

Training is provided within the University to support supervisors in the development of their role. Within the Institute/Faculty/Unit the career development and staff appraisal (CDSA) process provides individual supervisors with the opportunity to discuss their training needs and workload concerning supervision with their line manager. This enables support and the identification of ongoing development/training opportunities relevant for the role at a disciplinary level. ARCs are responsible for ensuring that supervisors have access to training to support the development of their role.

Development needs and performance issues are managed through the usual line management processes.

Where there are concerns about quality of supervision, directors of research degrees (or equivalent, including Research Degrees Co-ordinator in ARCs) can, where required, provide feedback to line managers.

Where supervisors have concerns about the quality or progress of a student's work, the relevant procedures should be followed (procedure for managing unsatisfactory progress, Research Degree Regulations Appendix 3).

Director of Research Degrees (or Research Degrees Co-ordinator in an ARC) supports the team through a number of actions including the procedure for managing unsatisfactory progress.

## **Part 6 Contact details**

### **Research Enterprise and Scholarship Unit**

#### **Graduate School**

The Open University

Walton Hall

Milton Keynes

MK7 6AA

Phone +44 (0)1908 653806

Email [research-degrees-office@open.ac.uk](mailto:research-degrees-office@open.ac.uk)

The Graduate School is open from 8:30 to 17:00, Monday to Thursday and 8:30 to 16:30 on Fridays.

#### **Research and Enterprise Office**

Phone +44 (0)1908 659531

Fax +44 (0)1908 655477

For advice on intellectual property assignment and technology transfer:

Email [enterprise@open.ac.uk](mailto:enterprise@open.ac.uk)

For advice on support for research funding:

Email [research-support@open.ac.uk](mailto:research-support@open.ac.uk)

#### **Research Ethics**

Phone +44 (0)1908 654858

Email [research-ethics@open.ac.uk](mailto:research-ethics@open.ac.uk)

Website [Research Ethics](#)

#### **Research Career Development**

Phone +44 (0)1908 653677

Fax +44 (0)1908 655477

Email [research-training-development@open.ac.uk](mailto:research-training-development@open.ac.uk)

#### **Faculty offices**

Contact details for all research areas can be found on the [research](#) website.

## **Other areas of the University**

### **Ceremonies Centre**

The Open University  
PO Box 123  
Milton Keynes  
MK7 6DQ

Phone +44 (0)1908 653003

Email [ceremonies@open.ac.uk](mailto:ceremonies@open.ac.uk)

### **Student Casework Office**

The Open University  
PO Box 5155  
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MK7 6YJ

Phone 01908 659535

Email [studentcaseworkoffice@open.ac.uk](mailto:studentcaseworkoffice@open.ac.uk)

### **Data Protection Coordinator**

The Open University  
PO Box 497  
Milton Keynes  
MK7 6AT

Email [data-protection@open.ac.uk](mailto:data-protection@open.ac.uk)

### **The Open University Library**

Walton Hall  
Milton Keynes  
MK7 6AA

Phone +44 (0)1908 659001

Email [Lib-help@open.ac.uk](mailto:Lib-help@open.ac.uk)

### **Open University Computing Helpdesk**

The Open University  
Walton Hall  
Milton Keynes  
MK7 6AA

Phone +44 (0)1908 653972

Website [Computing Helpdesk](#)

### **Open University Students Association**

The Open University  
PO Box 397  
Milton Keynes  
MK7 6BE

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### **Open University Student Budget Accounts Ltd (OUSBA)**

The Open University  
PO Box 508  
Milton Keynes  
MK7 6BX

Phone +44 (0)1908 655777

Local rate (UK only) 0300 303 7444

Email [ousba@open.ac.uk](mailto:ousba@open.ac.uk)

### **Statistics Advisory Service**

Department of Mathematics and Statistics  
The Open University  
Walton Hall  
Milton Keynes  
MK7 6AA

Email [Stats-Advisory@open.ac.uk](mailto:Stats-Advisory@open.ac.uk)

Website [Statistics Advisory Service](#)