

# REGULATIONS

## E6 Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research (MPhil and PhD)

**Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research  
Leading to the Award of the University's Degrees of  
Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy, PhD by Published Work, MA, MSc, LLM by  
Research and the Research Component of the Professional Doctorate**

### 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Code of Practice sets out the responsibilities of research students enrolled at Oxford Brookes University, their supervisors and Faculties. The guidelines contained in the Code represents the University's view of what constitutes good practice for postgraduate research. This Code will be supplemented by separate Faculty guidelines covering specific Faculty practice. The Code of Practice is not intended to provide a comprehensive guide to the procedures involved in undertaking a research degree and must be read in association with the following University approved codes and regulations:

- Research Degree Regulations;
- Code of Practice for Research Student Training;
- Intellectual Property Policy;
- Ethical Standards for Research involving Human Participants Code of Practice;
- Personal Development Planner and Research Skills Training Diary;
- Regulations for the degree of PhD by Published Work;
- Research degree - Regulations for MA by Research, MSc by Research, LLM by Research;
- Research component of the Professional Doctorate;
- Notes of guidance for internal examiners on Research Degree Examinations;
- University Research Studentship Scheme Handbooks (Student);
- Academic Integrity Policy.

Copies of all documentation produced by the Research Degrees Sub-Committee or the University are available from the Research Degrees Team's Intranet website.

1.2 Throughout this Code, the following terminology is used:

'Faculties' are administrative and academic divisions within the institution.

'Students' refer to those people enrolled to study for a research degree.

'Supervisors' are those members of staff who guide the students' research.

The 'Director of Studies' is the senior member of the supervision team who has overall responsibility for the supervision of the student.

'Postgraduate Research Tutors' are members of staff who have responsibility for research student matters within a Faculty, on behalf of the PVC Dean of Faculty.

The 'Research Degrees Sub-Committee' is the senior committee in the University with responsibility for research degree matters.

'Research Degrees Team' is the central administrative unit, located within Student Central, which supports the Research Degrees Sub-Committee and is responsible for research degree administration.

- 1.3 These guidelines are published annually by the University, and students and their supervisors should acquaint themselves with them.
- 1.4 As defined in the University's Research Degree Regulations an MPhil or PhD thesis should be a critical investigation and evaluation of an approved topic, including the demonstration of understanding of research methods appropriate to the chosen field. A PhD thesis, in addition to this, should result in an independent and original contribution to knowledge. The MPhil or PhD degree will be awarded following the presentation and defence of the thesis by oral examination to the satisfaction of the examiners.
- 1.5 The MA, MSc or LLM by Research shall be awarded to a candidate who, having critically investigated and evaluated an approved topic and demonstrated an understanding of research methods appropriate to the chosen field, has presented and defended a thesis by oral examination to the satisfaction of the examiners.
- 1.6 The research component of the Professional Doctorate in Coaching and Mentoring shall be awarded to a candidate who has demonstrated the creation and interpretation of new knowledge through original research, or other scholarship, of a quality that satisfied peer review, extends the forefront of the discipline and merits publication. The thesis should meet the national qualification descriptors at D level as outlined by the QAA.
- 1.7 The University shall award the degree of PhD on the basis of Published Work to registered candidates whose submitted work forms a coherent programme of research, demonstrates the use of appropriate research methodology, and makes an original and sufficient contribution to the present state of knowledge in a particular field to the satisfaction of the examiners. The work submitted should reflect the same academic standards as those which operate for a traditional PhD based upon an approved programme of supervised research.
- 1.8 The University considers that full-time research students should be able to complete a satisfactory MPhil thesis within two years and PhD thesis within three years (and part-time students within three or four years for MPhil and five or six years for PhD) and recommends that they should initially plan their research accordingly. This Code of Practice establishes good practice to enable students at the University to complete their theses within the recommended times.
- 1.9 This document will be supplemented by Guidelines issued by individual Faculties within the University.
- 1.10 Guidance at Faculty or Department level, for example in handbooks, will provide additional advice for students and staff. When appropriate, Faculties may consider consulting external agencies e.g. funders, concerning codes of practice for research programmes.

## **2 ADMISSION**

- 2.1 Responsibility for the admission of students to a research degree lies with the PVC Dean of Faculty who may delegate that responsibility as described in 2.3 below.
- 2.2 Admissions procedures should be clear and consistently applied to ensure equality of opportunity, confidentiality and that only appropriately qualified and/or prepared students are

admitted onto research programmes. The Research Degree Regulations detail appropriate qualifications/ experience (see regulations 2.1 to 2.5).

- 2.3 Admissions decisions should always involve more than one member of appropriately experienced staff. Normally, the Faculty's or Department's Postgraduate Research Tutor or their deputy or the Chair of the Faculty Research Committee or Director of Research will be involved in the decision.
- 2.4 Admissions decisions will take into account the candidate's qualifications, *curriculum vitae* and previous work. Where appropriate prior experience or certificated learning will be credited according to the requirements of the specific programmes. Two academic references will be obtained and, wherever possible, the candidate will be interviewed. Where possible a telephone or video-conferencing interview should be conducted for international candidates.
- 2.5 Appropriate evidence of competency in the use of English will be required (see regulation 2.4).
- 2.6 Admissions decisions will take into account whether appropriate supervision is available for the research proposed and whether this supervision is likely to be sustainable (see 4.3 maximum numbers to be supervised). They will also take into account the research environment available for the work and only take on students in areas where there is a sufficiently large number of staff to supervise a particular topic.
- 2.7 Admissions decisions will take into account whether a self-funded candidate has, or is likely to secure, the necessary financial support to enable them to undertake their studies for the duration of the programme. Candidates applying from a number of countries may now be required to pay a deposit at the offer stage in order to be granted a visa for entry.
- 2.8 Where a studentship is fully or partly funded from a University or external source, the terms, conditions and remuneration available should be clearly communicated to the candidate, together with a clear indication of any other remuneration the student is likely to receive.
- 2.9 It should be noted that an offer letter constitutes a formal contract with a student and care should be taken to ensure all the details are relevant and accurate.
- 2.10 The formal offer of a place on the a research student programme or research studentship should be made in writing by the Faculty and signed by the Faculty's or Department's Postgraduate Research Tutor and should include:
  - 2.9.1 The total fees, including any other charges such as bench fees, which will be levied
  - 2.9.2 A brief outline of the proposed research area and the normal period of study, including mode of study
  - 2.9.3 The names of the supervisors (normally indicating the Director of Studies, who must be suitably qualified see 4.2) and other supervisory arrangements
  - 2.9.4 A clear statement that continuation is dependent on satisfactory academic progress
  - 2.9.5 The nature and extent of other duties (e.g. teaching) required (if any)
  - 2.9.6 The name and requirements and conditions of any sponsor, CASE award or similar (if any)
  - 2.9.7 A summary of the general facilities that will be made available<sup>1</sup>
  - 2.9.8 Requirements of attendance, holiday allocation, progress reports and review<sup>1</sup>
  - 2.9.9 Detail of compulsory Faculty or Department research methods or other training courses if any<sup>1</sup>
  - 2.9.10 Self-funded student should provide evidence that they are able to adequately fund the whole

- of their research degree programme;
- 2.9.11 The University's terms and conditions governing entry to and study on the research programme, Ethics policy, Intellectual Property Rights policy and Health and Safety information<sup>1</sup>
- 2.10 Should the need arise, the University will implement other regulations and policies relating to misconduct, including plagiarism as laid down in the following documents:
- Academic Integrity;
  - Cheating and Plagiarism;
  - Data Protection;
  - Research Ethics
- 2.11 Admission decision must take into account the needs and requirements of students with disabilities and other special needs. A clear statement must be made at the outset, indicating the level of support available for the student from both the Faculty and University.
- 2.12 When admitting a student to the full-time Research Degrees Programme, the Postgraduate Research Tutor must be satisfied that the student has sufficient time available to dedicate to their PhD. Normally, a full-time student must allocate at least 35 hours a week to work on their research programme and should not undertake more than 20 hours per week paid employment or other commitments. Part-time candidates should have a minimum of 15 hours per week available for their programme of study over the full duration of their programme.

<sup>1</sup>These may be included with the covering letter as supporting documentation; however reference to their importance should be made in the letter.

- 2.13 It is essential that the Research Degrees Team be informed of the offer as soon as the student accepts it and a copy of all correspondence relating to the offer must be lodged with the Office.

### 3. INDUCTION

Both the University and Faculties will carry out induction of new research students. Induction will include written information and formal or informal meetings.

On enrolment all students will receive an Enrolment Pack from the Research Degrees Team containing information on:

- Research degree procedures and forms, together with key dates and deadlines
- Student welfare
- Training programmes
- Maps and details of the University's facilities
- Relevant University policy documents
- Information on complaints and appeals procedures

- 3.1.2 Faculties and/or Departments will run a formal or informal induction event to enable students to be introduced to staff involved in research degree supervision, monitoring and administration. This event (or events) will include:

- The Faculty research environment, including resources and facilities
- Health and safety
- Faculty research training events
- Dates, deadlines, monitoring, progression and review procedures

Expectations of student conduct and academic standards  
Ethics  
Intellectual Property Rights  
Complaints and appeals procedures within the Faculty  
Opportunities for networking within the Faculty  
Opportunities within the Faculty for feedback and comment on issues related to supervision, facilities and other resources  
Opportunities for networking external to the Faculty, including funding sources for attendance at conferences.

3.2 The University will also run an induction event which will include:

Research training events and managing the training process  
Time management and milestones  
Student supervisor relationships  
The process of registering for a research degree  
Monitoring and progression, including an introduction to the Research Degrees Sub-Committee  
An introduction to the facilities of the University including Library and Learning Resources

#### **4. SUPERVISION**

4.1 The student will be supervised by a team which will be led by a Director of Studies and include normally one or two Second Supervisors. The PVC Dean of Faculty or Deputy has the responsibility

for ensuring that a Director of Studies is appointed for each student. The Director of Studies would

normally be appointed simultaneously with the offer of a place. Under no circumstances should

Faculties ask students to find their own supervisors.

4.2 No member of staff should be appointed as Director of Studies unless they have supervised one research student to completion and completed key components of the Supervisor Training Course.<sup>2</sup> Where a Director of Studies only has one completion, whether it as Director of Studies, Second Supervisor or Third Supervisor, the supervision of that research programme must have been for more than two thirds of the whole programme, anything less will not be considered sufficient to meet this requirement. However, where a member of staff has had substantial experience of supervising graduate students and where the team as a whole has supervised at least two research students to completion, the relevant Sub-Committee with the Faculty or Department Postgraduate Research Tutor, will assess whether the experience is sufficient to take on the role of Director of Studies. The recommendation must be approved by the Chair of the Research Degrees Sub-Committee before the member of staff can be appointed.

4.3 One individual shall not normally be Director of Studies for more than six full-time research students (pro rata for part-time students) and a further six students may be supervised as Second Supervisor, but the total number should not exceed a maximum of twelve students. The Postgraduate Research Tutor and PVC Dean of Faculty or Head of Department shall assess the workload of a member of staff to ascertain the appropriate number of students to be supervised by that individual. Supervisory time should be included in the individual's workload plan.

4.4 Staff acting in the role of Second Supervisor should not supervise more than six full-time students (pro rata for part-time) If this number is exceeded, a letter should be provided from the PVC Dean of Faculty, confirming that the numbers allocated to the individual had been addressed through the Faculty work load planning review.

- 4.5 At least one supervisor should normally be a member of academic staff of the University. The PVC Dean of Faculty must ensure that the supervisors are suitably qualified for the proposed project. The supervisory team should have substantial research experience in the relevant subject area and normally have experience of supervising at least two research degree candidates to successful and timely completion at the appropriate level (see regulation 9.4).
- 4.6 Supervisors are entitled to decide what subjects they can usefully supervise; although every effort will be made, the University cannot guarantee that students will be able to work with any particular supervisor or that they will have the same supervisor throughout their period of study at the University.
- 4.7 A student may ask for a change of supervisor if the student considers the relationship between the student and supervisor has irretrievably broken down and the student should take the matter up with the Director of Studies in the first instance. If there is no way to resolve the situation, the matter should be referred to the Postgraduate Research Tutor, stating the reasons for the proposed change. The Postgraduate Research Tutor should then advise the PVC Dean of Faculty of the most appropriate action, such as the appointment of an additional or replacement supervisor. If the supervisor in question is the Postgraduate Research Tutor, the matter should be taken up with the PVC Dean of Faculty.
- 4.8 Supervisors must demonstrate their willingness to maintain and update the relevant supervisory skills. This should include attending the training provided by the University's Deputy Head of the Graduate School (Training).
- 4.9 Exceptionally the role of Director of Studies may be divided between no more than two Co-Directors of Studies. A Co-Director of Studies may supervise twelve students but this should not be added to the full quota allowed for other supervisory roles. In these cases the role of each person would have to be clearly identified at the outset and a case made to the relevant Sub-Committee for approval.
- 4.10 All part-time lecturers and supervisors, whether internal members of staff or external, must be issued with a contract containing full details of their role and responsibilities in relation to their supervisory role on a student's team.

<sup>2</sup> Key components include attendance at relevant elements of the Supervisor Training Programme. The level of equivalent courses will be considered by the Deputy Head of the Graduate School (Training), the Faculty or Department Postgraduate Research Tutor and Chair of the Research Degrees Sub-Committee.

## **5 EXTERNAL SUPERVISORS**

- 5.1 External supervisors should also engage in the training activities designed to enhance their supervisory capabilities. Such supervisors will be invited to attend relevant training offered by the University or should record attendance at equivalent training with the Research Degrees Team. The Research Degrees Sub-Committee will ensure that external supervisors have the range of current skills required for their role in the supervisory team.
- 5.2 External supervisors must also comply with all other requirements laid out in the University's Code of Practice and Research Degree Regulations.

## **6 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SUPERVISION TEAM**

- 6.1 The Director of Studies is responsible for the supervision of the student and the work of the supervision team. The roles and responsibilities of the supervisory team will be agreed at the start of each student's programme (see Section 2.9). Supervisory agreements will be reviewed as an ongoing process by the Research Degrees Sub-Committee at registration, transfer from MPhil to PhD and as part of annual monitoring.
- 6.2 The supervision team must have knowledge of a student's subject area and/or theoretical approach to be applied. The roles and responsibilities of the team must be articulated in the RDSC application for approval of registration and as part of any application for change of supervisory arrangements. If a student's work goes significantly outside the supervision team's field, the supervisors and the Faculty should be responsible for finding specialists either inside or outside the University who could be appointed as an advisor; this may in some cases involve a change in the supervision arrangements.  
All applications must be approved by the Research Degrees Sub-Committee.
- 6.3 There should be regular supervisory sessions between the student and a member of the supervisory team. Practice and frequency will inevitably vary from Faculty to Faculty and at different stages of the research, but, as a guideline, 44 hours per year would be appropriate for full-time students (based on the notion of one hour per week). For part-time students the equivalent time should be approximately half of this. Frequency of meetings and the nature of supervisory sessions should be agreed at the outset and reviewed regularly. It is recommended that the supervision team should meet as a whole once a Semester. Supervisory sessions may take the form of meetings, email interactions, telephone discussions, video conferencing, skype, workshops, seminars and conferences, as deemed appropriate by the supervisory team. It is important that supervisory sessions should be largely uninterrupted by telephone calls, personal callers or Faculty business. It is advisable to arrange the time of the next meeting at the end of each session.
- 6.4 If the student has an urgent problem, the supervisors should deal with the matter as soon as possible. If this were not possible the student should be referred to the Postgraduate Research Tutor or PVC Dean of Faculty.
- 6.5 Directors of Studies should inform their students and the Postgraduate Research Tutor of times when they will be away from the University for any extended period so that the students can plan accordingly and the Faculty can make special arrangements if necessary.
- 6.6 The supervisors should review and critically comment on the student's work as it progresses, normally within two weeks. However, in the case of a student submitting a substantial number of chapters or the final draft of the thesis for assessment, the timescale for reviewing the work will be agreed with the supervisors.
- 6.7 The supervisors should assist new students to plan their time, draw up a programme of work and monitor their subsequent progress. The supervisors should assist students in completing the application to register for a research degree. The application has to be approved by the Postgraduate Research Tutor or the Chair of the Faculty Research Committee and should normally be submitted to the Research Degrees Sub-Committee within the first 6 months after initial enrolment. The Research Degrees Sub-Committee will not backdate the effective date of registration by more than 6 months unless for good reason (see regulation 5.1). The supervisors should be aware of the requirements of some funding bodies that renewal of funding can depend on successful transfer from MPhil to PhD and should help students on such contracts to plan their work accordingly. It is the supervisors' responsibility to ensure that all the necessary administrative steps in undertaking a research degree - such as registration, transfer, approval of examiners, suspension or extension of registration - are carried out promptly at the appropriate time.

- 6.8 Supervisors should keep a record of formal supervisory sessions with students and where possible they should also keep a note of other interactions by recording the date and time of the sessions and the major areas of discussion. In addition students should comply with Section 7.2 and keep a record of all meetings with supervisors and sign them confirming the agreed outcome of the meeting. An email is an acceptable alternative to a signature when necessary and these records should be made available to the PVC Dean of Faculty or Postgraduate Research Tutor upon request. Other documents, such as medical certificates, which might have a bearing on the student's ability or capability to progress satisfactorily must also be kept.
- 6.9 Once the annual monitoring process has been completed, the Director of Studies should then summarise the outcome of the monitoring and submit an annual report on the student's progress, on the RDSC-APR form. When the supervisory team have completed their reports the form is sent to the Postgraduate Research Tutor or Faculty Research Committee who will review the report and once they are satisfied with the report, they will sign it on behalf of the Faculty and forward it to the Research Degrees Team. This assessment process must include one person external to the supervisory team and all students should be interviewed each year as part of the monitoring process. All annual monitoring reports are reviewed by the Research Degrees Team and any concerns or outstanding actions are reported to the appropriate subject Sub-Committee of the University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee.
- 6.10 The supervisors must ensure that the student is notified in writing by the Director of Studies if either progress or the standard of work is unsatisfactory, and arrange any necessary remedial action. Copies of the reports etc. should be held by the Director of Studies on his/her copy of the student's file and an email will be accepted as the equivalent to a signature when confirming agreement of these records.
- 6.11 It is the responsibility of the supervisors to ensure that the data, results, and information collated by the student during his or her research are freely available to the student for the purposes of the research degree for which the student is registered.
- 6.12 Any public output resulting from the student's work should give due acknowledgement of the student's contribution, generally through co-authorship.
- 6.13 In matters relating to intellectual property rights, supervisors should refer to the University's IPR policy.
- 6.14 Supervisors should advise their students about courses within the University which may complement their field of research. Supervisors should also consider any training which can be provided in generic skills (as detailed in the University Code of Practice for Research Student Training).
- 6.15 The supervisors should take an active part in introducing the student to meetings of learned societies, seminars and workshops and to other research workers in the field. The supervisors should give advice on writing up the research work in the form of papers and the final thesis, and should give advice on publication as appropriate.
- 6.16 The supervisors should nominate internal and external examiners to the Research Degrees Sub-Committee for approval at least three months before the expected date of submission of the thesis, and should ensure that the student is made fully aware of the examination procedures.
- 6.17 Supervisors must ensure that the agreed sections of their student's work is submitted through Turnitin as required and that work submitted for examination has been correctly referenced.
- 6.18 Supervisors must ensure that their students begin to obtain permission for the use of all third



in party copyright material from an early stage in the programme in order that it may be included in the publicly available online version of the thesis.

## **7 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STUDENT**

- 7.1 The student should prepare, with the assistance of the supervisors, an application to register for a research degree. The application has to be approved by the Postgraduate Research Tutor or the Chair of the Faculty Research Committee and should normally be submitted to the Research Degrees Sub-Committee within the first 6 months after initial enrolment. The Research Degrees Sub-Committee will not backdate the effective date of registration by more than 6 months unless for good reason (see regulation 5.2). In the application the student should define the area of research, show familiarity with appropriate background knowledge and the context within which the research is to be set, outline the literature review, and prepare a proposed plan of work. Students are advised to read the Research Degrees Sub-Committee's 'Notes of Guidance on Completing the Application to Register for a Research Degree, Form RDSC-R' before completing the application form.
- 7.2 The responsibility is on students to generate topics for discussion with their supervisors and to set the agenda for supervisory sessions. Students should keep a record of their meetings with supervisors and sign them confirming what has been agreed. It is the student's responsibility to make contact with the supervisor. Any serious problems a student has with a supervisor, including those of access, should be taken up by the student with the supervisor, or with the Postgraduate Research Tutor.
- 7.3 In their own interests, students should submit their work frequently to their supervisors for review.
- 7.4 Students should take note of the guidance and feedback from their supervisors.
- 7.5 Students are required to produce a brief written annual progress report on their research, which should be submitted to the Postgraduate Research Tutor and copied to the supervisors. In addition, Faculty's will have in place a procedure which gives students the opportunity to comment directly to the Postgraduate Research Tutor or PVC Dean of Faculty on the adequacy of supervision and facilities provided for their research.
- 7.6 Students are required to attend both the Faculty and the University Training programmes (as detailed in the Code of Practice for Research Training)
- 7.7 Students are required to participate in any research seminar programme organised by the Faculty, where they can present their work to their peers. Students are advised that this is an important part of their course.
- 7.8 Students should generally produce all written work for the thesis in word-processed or typed form and in the appropriate professional style.
- 7.9 Students are required to present the final version of the thesis to their Director of Studies before submission.
- 7.10 Students should acknowledge the University and their supervisors in any public output which results from their research degree work.

- 7.11 In matters relating to intellectual property rights, students should refer to the University's IPR policy.
- 7.12 Students must ensure that agreed sections of their work are submitted through Turnitin as required by their Director of Studies and that all work submitted for examination has been referenced correctly.
- 7.13 Students must ensure that they have obtained permission for the use of all third party copyright material to allow its inclusion in the publicly available online version of the thesis.

## **8 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE FACULTY**

- 8.1 The PVC Dean of Faculty is responsible for ensuring that a member of staff is appointed as Postgraduate Research Tutor for the Faculty, who will have responsibility for research students within the Faculty or Department.
- 8.2 Each Faculty will have an appropriate committee that will have responsibility for reviewing student progress and other postgraduate matters. It is recommended that this committee consists of the PVC Dean of Faculty or Deputy, Chair of the Research Committee; the Postgraduate Research Tutor (or tutors), at least two or three members of academic staff, and, where appropriate, a student representative. It is considered inappropriate for student representatives to be present when the progress of individual students is being discussed.
- 8.3 Each Faculty will produce its own guidelines for students, which will include what expectations it has for their progress, the specific Faculty procedures for monitoring expectations it has for their progress, the specific Faculty procedures for monitoring progress, and the timetable for transfer to PhD where appropriate progress, and the timetable for transfer to PhD where appropriate.
- 8.4 The progress and status of all research students, including Professional Doctorate students, full-time and part-time, must be reviewed annually by each Faculty. Candidates must produce a brief written annual progress report or equivalent, about their research as appropriate for their discipline (approximately 1,000 words). Where appropriate, students may be asked to submit particular chapters of their thesis as part of the monitoring assessment. The work should be submitted to the Faculty or Departmental Postgraduate Research Tutors and copied to the Supervisory Teams in accordance with the annual monitoring procedures. This assessment process must include one person external to the supervisory team and all students should be interviewed each year as part of the monitoring process.
- 8.5 Each Faculty must ensure that progress monitoring occurs during the first year of study and either at transfer of registration or the end of the second year for full-time students and pro-rata for part-time students. Where a student has registered for PhD direct, in addition to the first year report, a full progress review must take place at the end of the second year and should include an interview. The monitoring must include someone external to the supervisory team. Appropriate arrangements must be made for all students to make two oral presentations during their research degree programme and these should form part of progress monitoring.
- 8.6 The PVC Dean of Faculty, in conjunction with the Postgraduate Research Tutor, must ensure that no supervisor is overloaded with supervisory responsibilities. The recommended maximum number of registered research students for each supervisor must be laid out by each Faculty

and will vary according to the supervisor's other duties. In making this judgement, the PVC Dean of Faculty should bear in mind the guidelines for supervisory sessions in paragraph 6.3 above, and the recommendation of the University Research Degrees Sub-Committee that a supervisor's load should not normally exceed that of six full-time students or equivalent supervised as Director of Studies with a further six students supervised as a Second Supervisor. Supervision contact with research students is to be allocated as part of the formal contact hours of staff. PVC Deans may choose to divide the contact between the members of the supervision team. The terms of the allowable contact hours should be made explicit to the supervisors and the student. The Research Degrees Sub-Committee will retain the right not to approve a registration for a research degree if, in its judgement, the supervisor(s) would be overloaded by approving it.

- 8.7 Exceptionally the role of Director of Studies may be divided between no more than two Co-Directors of Studies. A Co-Director of Studies may supervise twelve students but this should not be added to the full quota allowed for other supervisory roles. In these cases the role of each person would have to be clearly identified at the outset and a case made to the relevant Sub-Committee for approval. Where the role of Director of Studies is divided in this way, a second supervisor is also required to complete the team.
- 8.8 The PVC Dean of Faculty, in conjunction with the Postgraduate Research Tutor, should ensure that supervisors have the training and support they require to undertake effective supervision. This support might include recommending a supervisor to attend various training courses, conferences and seminars; teaching relief; and adjustment of other Faculty responsibilities to take account of the supervisory load. The PVC Dean of Faculty, in conjunction with the Postgraduate Research Tutor must ensure that students are accepted into an environment that provides support for doing and learning about research and where high quality research is occurring. Where this environment is not already in place, they must facilitate networking links with the wider research community within the Faculty or Department. The Research Degrees Sub-Committee has overall responsibility, on behalf of the University, to ensure that appropriate training for supervisors is available and to monitor this provision.
- 8.9 The staff development and appraisal system should be used to identify training needs and PVC Deans of Faculty should review supervisors' responsibilities on an annual basis.
- 8.10 The PVC Dean of Faculty should discuss complaints with the supervisor if the supervisor is criticised for poor supervision. If the complaint is substantiated, the PVC Dean of Faculty should recommend remedial action, such as training or, if necessary, withdraw the supervisor from supervision duties.
- 8.11 In cases where the supervisor being criticised is also the PVC Dean of Faculty, the Chair of the Research Degrees Sub-Committee will have the responsibilities set out in paragraph 8.6 above.
- 8.12 Appropriate action should be taken by the Postgraduate Research Tutor to ensure that the supervision of students is maintained when a Director of Studies either leaves the University or is temporarily absent for a period longer than six weeks. This may involve a change in roles within the supervision team or the appointment of an additional or replacement supervisor.
- 8.13 The Faculty must, when asking research students to teach undergraduate students, provide appropriate instruction. Students whose teaching duties exceed 50 hours per year are required to attend the training course run by the Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development. Undergraduate teaching should be distributed amongst research students as fairly as possible to prevent individual students from being overloaded, which could have a detrimental effect on their research. Full-time students should not be required to undertake more than 6 hours of teaching duties per week including all teaching related activities.

- 8.14 It is the responsibility of the PVC Dean of Faculty to ensure that the level and amount of teaching duties undertaken by a student are appropriate to the student's experience in this area.
- 8.15 Special arrangements should be made where faults or a shortage of specialised equipment causes delay to the student, and the Faculty should attempt to minimise such disruption.
- 8.16 The Faculty must ensure that the student has access to all the data, results and information collated during the course of his or her research and that this is freely available to the student for the purposes of the research degree for which the student is registered.
- 8.17 Faculties must ensure that the progress of all students is monitored formally on an annual basis. The annual 3,000 written progress report produced by the student should be submitted to the Postgraduate Research Tutor, and the progress report should be followed up by an interview at the end of the student's first year and, where necessary, in subsequent years. In addition to any usual informal meetings with the Postgraduate Research Tutor, students are entitled to request an annual interview.
- 8.18 Faculties must have in place a separate procedure which allows students to anonymously comment on the adequacy of supervision and facilities provided for their research. This could be done through a form submitted to the PVC Dean of Faculty or Postgraduate Research Tutor or Deputy and the issues raised would be reported to the Research Degrees Sub-Committee for consideration. The Faculty must also ensure that an annual interview takes place between the students and the Postgraduate Research Tutor to discuss specific supervisory issues. Faculties must ensure that these procedures are made clear to the students.
- 8.19 Faculties should arrange seminars on a regular basis where students can present work to their peers.
- 8.20 All students should have training in research methods appropriate to their discipline and Faculties should ensure that appropriate research training programmes are in place to achieve this.
- 8.21 In addition, all students should have training in appropriate generic skills such as computing skills, communication and presentation skills, and report writing.
- 8.22 The Faculty is responsible for ensuring that the students are fully aware of the relevant Health and Safety Regulations.
- 8.23 The Faculty must ensure that students receive appropriate training regarding plagiarism and the use of an appropriate referencing system.

## **9 TEMPORARY SUSPENSION AND EXTENSION OF PERIOD OF REGISTRATION**

- 9.1 Exceptionally a candidate may apply to the Research Degrees Sub-Committee for a temporary suspension or extension of registration for not more than one year at a time and for not more than a maximum of two years. All applications will be considered on an individual basis and a case must be made by the student, which will be judged on merit, approval will not automatically be granted.
- 9.2 Applications for suspension of registration will only be considered in circumstances related to illness / accident, exceptional personal circumstances, maternity leave, or where a difficult language has to be learnt. If a student applies for a suspension of registration due to illness lasting for any period longer than 4 weeks, a medical certificate must be given to the

Postgraduate Research Tutor to support the application. If a suspension falls during an academic year, fees will not be payable for that period only.

- 9.3 A candidate may apply to the Research Degrees Sub-Committee for an extension to their period of registration. Extensions will be considered for time unavoidably lost through circumstances outside the control of the individual concerned or where a student's progress has been hindered through extreme pressure of external work for a limited period. Sympathetic consideration will be given to cases where the student has been absent through illness supported by a valid medical certificate.
- 9.4 Faculties should note that in the case of students in receipt of Research Council funded studentships, the process for being granted a suspension or extension of registration may differ from those applied at Oxford Brookes. It is important the Directors of Studies contact the Head of the Research Degrees Team for advice before the student begins the period of suspension as failure to follow their procedures may lead to the funding bodies imposing sanctions on the University as a whole for a substantial period of time.

## 10 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE RESEARCH DEGREE SUB-COMMITTEE

- 10.1 The University is responsible, through the Research Degree Sub-Committee, for the process of registering students, approving any changes to the status of students and approving examiners; for providing the framework for the discussion of policy relating to research students; for providing a central induction programme for students; for providing the framework for the training of supervisors; and for ensuring the adequacy of the arrangements for research training for students.
- 10.2 The Research Degree Sub-Committee is responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of Faculty's Research Degree programmes. All Faculties must undertake a full annual review of their programme and forward the report to the Research Degrees Sub-Committee for consideration.

The annual monitoring undertaken by both Faculties and the Research Degree Sub-Committee should include:

- recruitment profiles;
- feedback from research students via an Exit Questionnaire;
- feedback from sponsors and funding bodies;
- the number of appeals and complaints and how many were upheld;
- an analysis of comments from examiners.

## 11 COMPLETION

- 11.1 The supervisors and student should agree a timetable for completion which should include approval of the thesis title, nomination of the examiners, entry for the examination and compliance with other regulations of the University.
- 11.2 There should be no unreasonable delay in examining a thesis once it has been submitted to the University; three months is a reasonable maximum in most circumstances. However, the viva would not normally be arranged in less than 4 weeks from the date of submission.

- 11.3 In cases where a thesis is referred for resubmission in revised form, the Postgraduate Research Tutor should be informed of the situation and if appropriate, the student invited to discuss his or her position with the Postgraduate Research Tutor and supervisors. The supervisors should continue supervision until the thesis is resubmitted. If there are difficulties between supervisor and student, the Postgraduate Research Tutor should arrange alternative supervision arrangements.
- 11.4 An Independent Chair should be appointed in cases such as those outlined in the Guidance Notes for the appointment of an Independent Chair. The Independent Chair should, where possible be proposed when the examiners are nominated for approval. All internal examiners must attend relevant training to ensure consistency and standardisation of the processes.

## **12 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS PROCEDURES**

- 12.1 Students wishing to raise a complaint must do so in accordance with the University Student Complaint Procedure. Complaints may be in relation to a variety of university services including those in relation to the supervision of the research, the resources provided for it or any other of the obligations of the University in relation to the research (other than the conduct or result of an examination). A Complaint should be taken to the Postgraduate Research Tutor in the first instance and/or the PVC Dean of Faculty. If a satisfactory response is not received, a student may submit a written statement of grievance to the Academic Registrar, in accordance with the Procedure.
- 12.2 Students have the right to appeal against the following academic decisions made by a supervision team: not to register a student for a research degree, not to transfer registration from MPhil to PhD, to revert registration from PhD to MPhil, or to withdraw registration. Such appeals will be dealt with by the Faculty in the first instance and should be referred to the Postgraduate Research Tutor or the PVC Dean of Faculty. Where the matter remains unresolved, the student may appeal to the Research Degrees Sub-Committee. No appeal can be made against decisions of the Research Degrees Sub-Committee.
- 12.3 Students may request a review of an examination decision, either at the first examination or re-examination (section 20 of the Research Degree Regulations refers). A request for a review may only be made on the following grounds: that there were circumstances affecting the student's performance of which the examiners were not aware; that there is evidence of procedural irregularity in the conduct of the examination; or that there is evidence of unfair or improper assessment on the part of one or more of the examiners. As procedures exist for addressing grievances during the period of study, alleged inadequacy of supervisory or other arrangements during the period of study do not constitute grounds for requesting a review of the examination decision. The request for a review should be made to the Academic Registrar, who will determine whether there is sufficient evidence to support the need for a review. If so, a review panel will be convened to hear the case, which will make its recommendation to the Research Degrees Sub-Committee. There shall be no appeal from the decision of the review panel.

For further information about these regulations, please contact Student Central – Research Degrees Team.

**Approved by:**

Research Degrees Sub-Committee, 7 February 2012

Research and Knowledge Transfer Committee, 29 February 2012

**Last updated:**

Head of Research Degrees Team, December 2013