

## A6: RESEARCH DEGREES

### INTRODUCTION

*Programmes of research for the degrees of Master of Science by Research (MSc by Research), Master of Research (MRes), Master of Philosophy (MPhil), Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and Professional Doctorates may be based on any area of enquiry subject to the requirements that the Research Degrees Committee of the University is satisfied that such study is suited to academic research, and that the results can be satisfactorily examined.*

*The University shall award the degrees of MSc by Research, MRes, MPhil, PhD and Professional Doctorates to registered research students who successfully complete approved programmes of supervised research and satisfy the examination requirements.*

*Research students for the degree of MSc by Research, MRes and MPhil shall be expected to have critically investigated and evaluated an approved subject and to have demonstrated an understanding of research methods appropriate to their particular subject. In the case of the degree of PhD and Professional Doctorates, research students shall be expected to show evidence of critical investigation and evaluation together with a thorough understanding of appropriate research methods and to have made an original contribution to the knowledge of the subject. Research students for the degrees of MSc by Research, MRes, MPhil, PhD and Professional Doctorates shall be required to present and to defend a thesis by oral examination (or approved alternative) to the satisfaction of the examiners.*

*The University encourages co-operation with industrial, commercial, professional and research establishments in work leading to research awards. Formal agreement between the University and a collaborating establishment shall normally involve the research student's access to facilities and resources, including advice and supervision, provided jointly by the University and the collaborating establishment. All proposed research programmes shall be considered on their academic merits without reference to the interests of a collaborating establishment or associated funding agency.*

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## REGULATION

### 1. PRINCIPLES

#### 1.1 Research Degrees Committee

The Research Degrees Committee of the University operates to ensure, on behalf of Academic Council, that the University's Regulations for research degrees are complied with, and that the standard of awards and interests of students are assured.

#### 1.2 Research Degree Awards of the University

1.2.1 The University has the authority to confer the following awards:

- (i) Master of Science by Research (MSc by Research);
- (ii) Master of Research (MRes);
- (iii) Master of Philosophy (MPhil);
- (iv) Doctor of Philosophy (PhD);
- (v) Doctor of Business Administration (DBA);
- (vi) Doctor of Engineering (EngD);
- (vii) Doctor of Information Science (DInfSci);
- (viii) Doctor of Professional Practice (DPP);
- (ix) Doctor of Physiotherapy.

1.2.2 Such awards may also be conferred posthumously in accordance with [Regulation A4: Assessment and Recommendations of Assessment Boards, paragraph 15](#).

1.2.3 The degree of MSc by Research, MRes or MPhil shall be awarded to a research student who, having critically investigated and evaluated an approved topic and demonstrated an understanding of research methods appropriate to the field of study, has presented and defended a thesis, by oral examination (or approved alternative), to the satisfaction of the examiners.

1.2.4 The degree of PhD and Professional Doctorates shall be awarded to a research student who, having critically investigated and evaluated an approved topic resulting in an independent and original contribution to knowledge and demonstrated a thorough understanding of research methods appropriate to the field of study, has presented and defended a thesis, by oral examination (or approved alternative), to the satisfaction of the examiners.

### 1.3 Application of Academic Regulations to Research Students

1.3.1 As enrolled students of the University, research students are subject to the provisions of *Regulation A3: Student Conduct and Appeals*, with the exception of the following *Section 1: Academic Appeals - Awards and Progression Procedure*, which does not apply. Research students wishing to lodge an appeal in respect of the following, should refer to [paragraph 10](#) of this Regulation:

- (i) an examination decision of the Research Degrees Committee, made on the recommendation of the examiners either for the first examination or a re-examination; or
- (ii) a decision of the Research Degrees Committee to terminate the research student's registration and/or enrolment
- (iii) a decision of the Research Degrees Committee to refuse a transfer of registration to PhD following a second unsuccessful attempt.

1.3.2 Further to the student obligations and conduct specified in *Regulation A3: Student Conduct and Appeals, paragraph 4*, research students are subject to any Regulations, policies or instructions issued by the University in respect of research misconduct. For the purposes of this Regulation research misconduct may include (though is not limited to), the following whether deliberate, reckless or negligent:

- (i) failure to obtain appropriate permission to conduct research;
- (ii) deception in relation to research proposals;
- (iii) unethical behaviour in the conduct of research, for example in relation to research subjects;
- (iv) unauthorised use of information which was acquired confidentially;
- (v) deviation from good research practice, where this results in unreasonable risk of harm to humans, other animals or the environment;
- (vi) fabrication, falsification or corruption of research data;
- (vii) distortion of research outcomes, by distortion or omission of data that do not fit expected results;
- (viii) dishonest misinterpretation of results;
- (ix) publication of data known or believed to be false or misleading;
- (x) plagiarism, or dishonest use of unacknowledged sources;
- (xi) misquotation or misrepresentation of other authors;
- (xii) inappropriate attribution of authorship;
- (xiii) fraud or other misuse of research funds or research equipment;

- (xiv) attempting, planning or conspiring to be involved in research misconduct;
- (xv) inciting others to be involved in research misconduct;
- (xvi) collusion in or concealment of research misconduct by others.

## 2. ADMISSION

### 2.1 Principles of Admission

- 2.1.1 The principal academic criterion for determining an applicant's suitability for admission is that there is a reasonable expectation that he/she will be able to fulfil the award objectives and achieve the standard required for the award.
- 2.1.2 The admissions policy of the University seeks to ensure equality of opportunity for all applicants.
- 2.1.3 An enrolled research student may make an application to register for:
- (i) Master of Science by Research (MSc by Research);
  - (ii) Master of Research (MRes);
  - (iii) Master of Science by Research (MSc by Research)/Doctor of Philosophy (PhD);
  - (iv) Master of Research (MRes)/Doctor of Philosophy (PhD);
  - (v) Doctor of Business Administration (DBA);
  - (vi) Doctor of Engineering (EngD);
  - (vii) Doctor of Information Science (DInfSci);
  - (viii) Doctor of Professional Practice (DPP).
- 2.1.4 Exceptionally, the Research Degrees Committee may consider an application to register for the MPhil only, or the MPhil with the possibility of transfer to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (MPhil/PhD).

### 2.2 Admission Requirements

- 2.2.1 Applicants intending to register for either the degree of MSc by Research or MRes, or for MSc by Research or MRes with the possibility of transfer to PhD, shall normally possess a Class 1 or 2.1 honours degree from a United Kingdom university or other institution recognised for this purpose by the Research Degrees Committee, or a qualification and appropriate experience which is regarded by the Committee as equivalent to such an honours degree .

2.2.2 Direct registration for the degree of PhD may be permitted where an applicant holds a Masters degree by research awarded by a university in the United Kingdom or other institution recognised for this purpose by the Research Degrees Committee, provided that such a degree is in a discipline appropriate to the proposed programme of research and included training in research together with the realisation of a research project. The Committee may permit a research student to register who lacks a Masters degree but holds a good honours degree, or equivalent, in an appropriate discipline and where, in the opinion of the Committee, there is adequate evidence to show that the applicant possesses appropriate research and/or professional experience.

## 2.3 English Language Competence

2.3.1 The language of instruction at the University is English and proficiency in speaking, listening to, reading and writing English is essential. Students whose first language is not English, or who originate from countries whose national language is not English, are additionally required to demonstrate English language proficiency to the standard required by the University and published on its website ([www.rgu.ac.uk/elr](http://www.rgu.ac.uk/elr)) and, where appropriate, in accordance with current UK legislation. The School/Department/Centre shall ensure that an applicant has sufficient proficiency in the English language in order to satisfactorily complete the programme of research and to prepare and defend a thesis in English.

2.3.2 Exceptionally, there may be a requirement for more stringent English language competency in some courses and this shall be set with the prior approval of the Research Degrees Committee.

## 2.4 Research Methods and Related Studies

2.4.1 All research students, unless they can demonstrate prior learning deemed appropriate for the purpose by the Research Degrees Committee, shall be required to enrol on the University's *Postgraduate Certificate Research Methods*. In addition to serving as part of the research student's induction process, the course is intended to provide the research student with a programme of related studies and ensure the research student has attained the necessary competence in research methods and knowledge related to the subject of the thesis. The course is devised with the following objectives:

- (i) to equip the research student with the skills and knowledge necessary to undertake the proposed research;
- (ii) to make available a body of knowledge normally associated with a degree in the subject area of the proposed programme of research;
- (iii) to provide a breadth of knowledge in related subjects.

2.4.2 Simultaneous registration for a course at the University or any other institution, other than the *Postgraduate Certificate Research Methods*, shall require the permission of the Research Degrees Committee. The Committee shall permit a research student to register for another course of study concurrently with a research degree only where such a course of study is undertaken in the part-time mode and where the Committee is satisfied that dual registration shall not inhibit the research student's programme of research.

## 2.5 Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)

- 2.5.1 When considering applications from research students holding qualifications other than those stated in [paragraph 2.2](#) of this Regulation, the Research Degrees Committee requires to establish the applicant's suitability for the proposed programme of research. Applicants should therefore be prepared to provide the Committee with such evidence, together with the names of two appropriate referees whom the University can consult with reference to the applicant's academic attainment and fitness for research. The Research Degrees Committee may require an applicant to pass an externally assessed qualifying examination at a level equivalent to SCQF level 10 before registration is approved.
- 2.5.2 The Committee may permit a research student to register for a research degree who lacks formal post-school qualifications where, in the opinion of the Committee, there is substantial evidence to show that the applicant possesses appropriate research and/or professional experience.

## 3. ENROLMENT

- 3.1 A research student shall initially enrol as a student of the University at the time of initial admission to the University and, thereafter, shall re-enrol every twelve months during the period in which he/she is registered for an award. As part of the enrolment procedure a research student shall formally acknowledge that he/she accepts and will abide by the University Regulations.
- 3.2 Failure to enrol or re-enrol as required by [paragraph 3.1](#) above, within twelve weeks of the required enrolment/re-enrolment date, may result in termination of the research student's enrolment and registration, in accordance with the provisions of [paragraph 5.7](#) of this Regulation.

## 4. SUPERVISION

- 4.1 The Research Degrees Committee shall approve and appoint, at the time of each research student's registration, a supervisory team of at least two and normally not more than three supervisors, at least one of whom shall be a member of staff of the University.
- 4.2 Members of the supervisory team shall be appointed to the following roles:
- *Principal Supervisor*, with formal responsibility for the research student's supervision;
  - *Second Supervisor*;
  - *Study Coordinator*, with formal responsibility for ensuring compliance with the University's Regulations and quality procedures, ensuring effective supervision of the research student, and maintaining effective communication between the research student and the supervisory team.
- 4.3 Where the Principal Supervisor is a member of staff within the School, Department or Centre in which the research student is based, the Principal Supervisor will also assume the role of Study Coordinator.

- 4.4 Where the Principal Supervisor is not a member of staff within the School, Department or Centre in which the research student is based, or has not supervised a research student to successful completion of a PhD or other doctorate award, a Study Coordinator will be appointed from within the School, Department or Centre in which the research student is based.
- 4.5 No member of University staff shall be appointed as Principal Supervisor to more than six individual research students simultaneously.
- 4.6 A supervisory team shall normally have combined experience of supervising not less than two research students to successful completion of an equivalent level of degree being proposed by the research student.
- 4.7 In addition to the supervisory team, an adviser(s) may be appointed to contribute specialist knowledge or provide a link with an external agency.
- 4.8 A research student shall be ineligible to act as a member of a supervisory team for another research student, but may be appointed as an adviser.
- 4.9 Any change to the approved supervisory team shall require the approval of the Research Degrees Committee.
- 4.10 The Research Degrees Committee shall be responsible for ensuring that a research student's progress is not inhibited by changes in circumstances of any or all member(s) of the supervisory team, whether this be due to retiral, ill health or some other extended period of unavailability. The Research Degrees Committee will ensure appropriate alternative supervisory arrangements are in place, to the satisfaction of the Convener of the Research Degrees Committee, as soon as is practicable and no later than four weeks after being notified.

## **5. REGISTRATION FOR A RESEARCH DEGREE**

### **5.1 Approval of Registration**

- 5.1.1 A research student shall submit an application to register for a research degree three months after his/her initial enrolment as a research student of the University, irrespective of whether the research student intends studying full-time or part-time.
- 5.1.2 A research student may be accepted for registration for a research degree as a full-time or part-time student.
- 5.1.3 The Research Degrees Committee has delegated powers from Academic Council to approve or reject applications from research students applying to register for research degrees. In approving an application for registration to study for a research degree, the Research Degrees Committee shall satisfy itself that:
  - (i) the research student is suitably qualified;
  - (ii) the programme of research submitted by the applicant is viable;



- (iii) the supervision available is adequate and sustainable in terms of the programme requirements;
- (iv) appropriate facilities are available for the conduct of the programme of research.

5.1.4 When considering applications from students studying at a distance, the Research Degrees Committee may, in addition to the requirements of [paragraph 5.1.3](#) of this Regulation, consider applications subject to the following conditions:

- (i) the proposed programme of research is appropriate to the objectives of the degrees of MSc by Research, MRes, MPhil, PhD or Professional Doctorate as an educational programme for a registered research student;
- (ii) there is satisfactory evidence that the facilities available, both in the University and abroad, are appropriate to the proposed programme of research;
- (iii) the research student is prepared to establish close links with the University;
- (iv) the arrangements proposed for supervision permit frequent and substantial contact, including personal meetings between the research student and the supervisory team. There should also be regular contact between the Study Coordinator and any locally-based supervisor(s).

5.1.5 All programmes of research registered with the University must be compatible with and support existing work within the University; they should also be compatible with, and contribute to the advancement of education, learning and knowledge. The Research Degrees Committee shall expect the programme of research to reflect the particular strengths of the University and of any collaborating institution.

5.1.6 Where the programme of research submitted by an applicant forms part of a larger group project, the individually-registered programme of research shall be distinguishable for the purposes of assessment and the requirements of the award sought by the applicant. The application shall indicate clearly the applicant's individual contribution and its relationship to the group project.

5.1.7 Where a research student is associated with an overseas institution, the institution may be named as the collaborating establishment.

5.1.8 Where a proposed research degree project is wholly or in part funded by an external agency or by a collaborating establishment, the Research Degrees Committee shall ensure that the terms of the funding do not inhibit the fulfilment of the objectives of the project and/or the academic requirements of the research student's research degree, nor potentially gives rise to a conflict of interest with the University.

5.1.9 A research student may undertake a programme of research in which the research student's own creative work forms, as a point of origin or reference, a significant part of the intellectual enquiry subject to the work having been undertaken as part of the registered programme of research. Such creative work shall be clearly presented in relation to the argument of a written thesis and shall be set in its relevant theoretical historical, critical or design context. The final submission shall be accompanied by a permanent record of the creative element of the work, where practicable, bound in with

the thesis. The application for registration shall set out the form of the intended submission and the proposed method(s) of assessment.

- 5.1.10 A research student may undertake a programme of research in which the principal focus is the preparation of a scholarly edition of a text of texts, musical or choreographic work or other original artefact(s). The completed submission for such a programme shall include a copy of the edited text(s) or collection of artefact(s), appropriate textual and explanatory annotations together with a significant introduction and critical commentary which sets the text(s) in their relevant historical, theoretical and/or critical context.
- 5.1.11 Permission to present or defend a thesis in a language other than English will require the prior approval of the Research Degrees Committee, and shall normally only be given where the subject matter of the thesis involves language and related studies. Such permission shall require to be sought at the time of admission and shall be subject to the availability of suitably qualified supervisors and examiners.

## 5.2 Ethical Approval of Programmes of Research

When considering a proposed programme of research, the Research Degrees Committee shall satisfy itself that a research student's Study Coordinator has ensured the proposed programme of research has been considered in accordance with any policies or procedures of the University, or other relevant external body, may have in place in respect of the ethical approval of research.

## 5.3 Periods of Registration

- 5.3.1 Normally, full-time research students are expected to devote, on average, a minimum of 35 hours each week to their research throughout their period of registration for a research degree. Part-time students are expected to average a minimum of 18 hours per week throughout their period of registration for a research degree.
- 5.3.2 The minimum and maximum periods of registration shall be:

	Minimum	Recommended	Maximum
<i>PhD / Professional Doctorate</i>			
Full-time	30 months	36 months	48 months
Part-time	42 months	60 months	72 months
<i>MPhil</i>			
Full-time	18 months	24 months	36 months
Part-time	30 months	36 months	48 months
<i>MRes</i>			
Full-time	12 months	12 months	24 months
Part-time	21 months	24 months	30 months
<i>MSc by Research</i>			
Full-time	12 months	12 months	24 months

Part-time	21 months	24 months	30 months
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- 5.3.3 A full-time research student shall normally reach the standard for the MSc by Research or MRes within one year of registration, for the MPhil within two years of registration and for the PhD/Professional Doctorate within three years of registration. Where there is evidence that the research is proceeding exceptionally well, the Research Degrees Committee may approve a shorter minimum period of registration. An application for such reduction shall be submitted at the same time as the application for approval of the examination arrangements.
- 5.3.4 Where a research student changes from full-time to part-time or vice versa, the minimum and maximum registration periods shall normally be calculated pro rata as if he/she were a part-time research student. Notification of such a change shall be made in writing to the Research Degrees Committee.
- 5.3.5 A research student shall submit the thesis to the Secretary of the Research Degrees Committee before the expiry of the maximum period of registration. The Research Degrees Committee may extend a research student's period of registration solely for the purposes of writing-up, normally for not more than one year for full-time research students, and normally for not more than two years for part-time students. A research student seeking such an extension shall apply on the appropriate form and will be subject to a writing-up fee as determined by the University from time to time.

#### 5.4 Writing-Up of Thesis

Where the Research Degrees Committee extends a research student's period of registration solely for the purposes of writing-up (refer to [paragraph 5.3.5](#) of this Regulation) the research student shall be required to enrol for this period, which shall not normally exceed one year for full-time or part-time research students.

#### 5.5 Authorised Interruption of Studies

- 5.5.1 If a research student is prevented, by ill-health or other valid cause, from making progress with the research, the student may apply for an authorised interruption of registration to be approved by the Research Degrees Committee, normally for not totalling more than one year at a time. Any exceptions to this will be considered by the Research Degrees Committee on a case by case basis
- 5.5.2 An agreed period of interruption shall not be included in the period of registration, as specified in [paragraph 5.3.2](#) of this Regulation.

#### 5.6 Withdrawal from Studies

Where a research student wishes to withdraw from their programme of research and cease their registration and enrolment, the research student shall submit a completed *Withdrawal of Registration (RDW)* form to the Secretary of the Research Degrees Committee. The date on which this is submitted will serve as the date on which all outstanding over-payments or arrears of fees, scholarships or funds shall be re-

calculated. The withdrawal of registration shall be notified to the Research Degrees Committee by the Secretary.

## 5.7 Termination of Registration and/or Enrolment

- 5.7.1 Where the Graduate School and/or supervisory team has concerns with the progress of a research student and/or is unable to communicate with the research student for a period exceeding two months (or for such other period as required by UK Visas and Immigration service), the Head of the Graduate School shall write to the research student to give 28 days to submit an *Extenuating Circumstances Claim Form*, together with verifiable/relevant evidence.
- 5.7.2 The Research Degrees Committee shall consider the *Termination of Registration/Enrolment (RDTerm)* form, supporting evidence provided by the Graduate School or supervisory team and, if submitted by the research student, the *Extenuating Circumstances Claim Form*. Once approved by the Research Degrees Committee, the termination will be effective from the date of the Committee meeting.
- 5.7.3 The Convener of Research Degrees Committee shall write to the research student to:
- confirm the Research Degrees Committee's decision and the effective date;
  - advise the research student of the right to appeal, in accordance with *Regulation A6: Research Degrees*, paragraph 10, *Research Degrees Appeal Procedure*;
  - advise of outstanding debts or over-payments or arrears of fees, scholarships, funds etc.;
  - advise, where appropriate, that the UK Visas and Immigration service will be notified.

## 6. MONITORING AND SUPPORTING STUDENT PROGRESS

### 6.1 Expected Contact and Progress

In addition to the obligations for students specified in [Regulation A3: Student Conduct and Appeals, paragraph 4](#), the research student is obliged to meet the requirements of the University both in respect of expected contact throughout the period of registration ([Schedule 6.2](#) of this Regulation refers), and of making satisfactory progress, as specified in the offer letter issued to the research degree applicant.

### 6.2 Annual Monitoring

- 6.2.1 At least once in each year of registration the Research Degrees Committee shall establish whether the research student is still engaged with the programme of research and is maintaining regular and frequent contact with the supervisors.
- 6.2.2 The Committee shall consider an *Annual Monitoring Progress Report (RSR)* and determine any appropriate action which, exceptionally, may include the termination of the research student's registration in accordance with [paragraph 5.7](#) of this Regulation.

6.2.3 It is also an expectation that the research student's Study Coordinator will undertake an informal interim review at six months after each submission of the *Annual Monitoring Progress Report (RSR)*.

### 6.3 Exit with MSc by Research, MRes or MPhil

6.3.1 A research student who is registered for the degree of PhD and who is unable to complete the approved programme of research, or wishes to exit their studies prematurely, may at any time prior to the submission of the thesis for examination for PhD, apply to the Research Degrees Committee for the registration to transfer to that for MPhil, MSc by Research or MRes. In doing so, the research student shall be required to submit a thesis and undertake an oral examination (or approved alternative) in fulfilment of the intended award and in accordance with the requirements of the Research Degrees Committee; transfer to the MPhil, MSc by Research or MRes will be permitted only when a research student has also successfully completed the *Postgraduate Certificate Research Methods*.

6.3.2 A research student who is registered for the degree of MPhil and who is unable to complete the approved programme of research, or wishes to exit their studies prematurely, may at any time prior to the submission of the thesis for examination for MPhil, apply to the Research Degrees Committee for the registration to transfer to that for MSc by Research or MRes. In doing so, the research student shall be required to submit a thesis and undertake an oral examination (or approved alternative) in fulfilment of the intended award and in accordance with the requirements of the Research Degrees Committee; transfer to the MSc by Research or MRes will be permitted only when a research student has also successfully completed the *Postgraduate Certificate Research Methods*.

## 7. TRANSFER OF REGISTRATION TO DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

7.1 A research student registered initially for the degree of MSc by Research, or MRes, or MPhil and who wishes to transfer to PhD shall apply to the Research Degrees Committee. Such a request shall be made only where his/her supervisor considers that sufficient progress has been made to provide evidence of development towards the standard for the degree of PhD.

7.2 Normally, an application to transfer shall be submitted following twelve months of full-time study or approximately 24 months of part-time study.

7.3 An application to transfer of registration from MSc by Research, MRes or MPhil to PhD shall be submitted, using the *Transfer of Registration to PhD (RDT)* form, to the Secretary of the Research Degrees Committee. The form shall be accompanied by:

- (i) a *Transfer Proposal (TP)* form;
- (ii) evidence of successful completion of the *Postgraduate Certificate (PgCert) Research Methods*, unless otherwise granted exemption.

7.4 Before approving transfer from MSc by Research, MRes or MPhil to PhD, the Research Degrees Committee shall be satisfied that the research student has made sufficient

progress and that the proposed programme provides a suitable basis for work at PhD standard, which the research student is capable of pursuing to completion.

- 7.5 A research student initially registered for the degree of MSc by Research only, or MRes only, or MPhil only, shall be required to submit to the Research Degrees Committee, in addition to the *Transfer of Registration to PhD (RDT)* form completed in accordance with [paragraph 7.3](#) of this Regulation, details of the objectives of the PhD extension and proposed plan of work for the PhD.
- 7.6 Where the Research Degrees Committee approves a transfer, any previous study will be subsumed within the award of PhD, and shall be regarded as non-award-bearing, unless the research student chooses to subsequently exit prematurely, as specified in [paragraph 6.2](#) of this Regulation, or the examiners recommend an award as specified in [paragraph 9.5](#) of this Regulation.
- 7.7 Where the Research Degrees Committee refuses a transfer, the research student shall be permitted one further opportunity to submit for transfer. Where the Research Degrees Committee refuses a transfer following a second unsuccessful attempt, the research student shall have the right to appeal in accordance with [paragraph 10](#) of this Regulation, and the supervisory team will advise the research student on the requirements to submit for an MSc by Research or MRes award.

## **8. THE THESIS**

### **8.1 Presentation and Content**

- 8.1.1 The thesis shall not be submitted for examination until the examination team has been appointed by the Research Degrees Committee.
- 8.1.2 The thesis shall be presented in the English language whether in printed or electronic format, except when specific permission has been granted by the Research Degrees Committee to submit in another language at the time of the research student's admission, as specified in [paragraph 5.1.11](#) of this Regulation. Where a thesis is presented in a language other than English, a summary in English of approximately 1,000 words shall be included.
- 8.1.3 Where a thesis is to be presented in electronic format the research student shall consult with the University Library at an early stage on the appropriate presentation and software for the thesis.
- 8.1.4 Details of the normal maximum length of text and the form of presentation to be adopted in the submission of a thesis for a research degree award, whether in either printed or electronic format, are specified in [Schedule 6.1](#) to this Regulation. Except where the Research Degrees Committee permits particular relaxation, all theses shall accord with [Schedule 6.1](#) to this Regulation.
- 8.1.5 There shall be an abstract of approximately 300 words which shall provide a synopsis of the content. The abstract shall state the nature and scope of the work undertaken together with the contribution made to the knowledge of the subject treated. The abstract shall have as a heading:

- the name of the author;
- the degree for which the thesis is submitted; and
- the title of the thesis.

8.1.6 If the thesis is in printed format, the abstract shall be bound into the thesis, and three loose copies of the abstract shall be submitted with the thesis. If the thesis is in electronic format, the abstract shall be submitted in electronic format. A list of no more than ten identifying keywords shall be submitted for indexing and information retrieval purposes.

8.1.7 The thesis shall include a statement of the research student's aims and objectives in undertaking the research project. It shall also contain an acknowledgement of published or other sources of material consulted (recorded in an appropriate bibliography) and any assistance received.

8.1.8 Where a research student's programme of research forms part of a collaborative group project, the thesis shall clearly indicate the research student's individual contribution and the extent of the collaboration.

## **8.2 Publication and Confidentiality**

8.2.1 The research student shall be free to publish material in advance of the submission of the thesis for examination in accordance with the University's policies; reference shall be made in the thesis to such published work. If the thesis is in printed format, copies of published material shall be bound in with the thesis or placed in an adequately secured pocket at the end of the thesis. If the thesis is in electronic format, copies of published material shall be submitted in electronic format.

8.2.2 In accordance with data protection and freedom of information legislation, a research student's thesis shall normally be made available to the public. Where either the research student or the University wishes a thesis to remain confidential, application shall normally be made to the Research Degrees Committee at the time of registration. In cases where the need for confidentiality emerges at a subsequent stage, a special application shall be made to the Research Degrees Committee at least six months prior to the date of the oral examination (or approved alternative). The period of confidentiality shall not normally exceed two years from the date of the oral examination (or approved alternative). Where a thesis is to remain confidential, examiners must be informed at the time of their appointment. Any application for an extension to the period of confidentiality shall be submitted to the Research Degrees Committee at least six months prior to the date on which the extension is required to commence.

8.2.3 The Research Degrees Committee shall normally approve an application for confidentiality only to enable a patent application to be lodged or to protect commercially or politically sensitive material. Where the Committee agrees that the confidential nature of the research student's work is such as to preclude free availability of the thesis through the University library or, where applicable, a collaborating establishment and, in the case of a PhD thesis, the British Library, the thesis shall be retained by the University on restricted access when it shall be available only to those directly involved in the project. Such restriction shall take effect immediately on completion of the programme of research and shall normally apply for a maximum period of two years. In exceptional circumstances, the Committee may approve a longer period or, where it considers it



appropriate, may reduce the period. An application for an extension to the period of confidentiality shall be submitted by the research student to the Secretary of the Research Degrees Committee at least six months prior to the date on which the extension is required to commence.

- 8.2.4 The printed or electronic copies of the thesis submitted for examination shall remain the property of the University, and the research student shall assign the copyright/intellectual property rights of the thesis to the University. Where the research student is employed by a third party, who is not the University, the employer will be contacted by the University to determine such rights.
- 8.2.5 Following the award of the degree, the Secretary of the Research Degrees Committee shall lodge one copy of the thesis in the University Library and one copy with any collaborating establishment. Unless an embargo has been approved by the Research Degrees Committee, the electronic copy of the thesis will be made available for full public access via the [Robert Gordon University Open Access Institutional Repository \(OpenAIR\)](#) web pages and the [British Library Electronic Thesis Online Service \(EThOS\)](#). After the agreed embargo period has ended, the thesis will be made accessible via the [OpenAIR](#) and [EThOS](#) web pages unless the author has obtained approval from the Research Degrees Committee to extend the restriction on public access until a later date. Information about the inclusion of theses in [OpenAIR](#) and [EThOS](#) is available at the 'Frequently Asked Questions' section of the institutional repository web pages, available at <https://openair.rgu.ac.uk/>.

## 9. EXAMINATION

### 9.1 Examination - General

- 9.1.1 The examination for the Degrees of MSc by Research, MRes, MPhil, PhD and Professional Doctorates shall have two stages:
- (i) the submission and preliminary assessment of a thesis;
  - (ii) the defence of the thesis by oral examination (or approved alternative).
- 9.1.2 The oral examination (or approved alternative) shall be conducted in English, except with the specific permission of the Research Degrees Committee, normally at the time of the research student's admission as specified in [paragraph 5.1.11](#) of this Regulation.
- 9.1.3 The oral examination (or approved alternative) shall normally be held in the United Kingdom. Exceptionally, the Research Degrees Committee may give approval for the examination to take place outwith the United Kingdom.



- 9.1.4 A research student shall not be permitted to proceed to examination:
- (i) for a Doctoral degree, as specified in [paragraph 1.2.1](#) of this Regulation, unless they have successfully completed the *Postgraduate Certificate Research Methods* (or approved alternative);
  - (ii) for a Masters degree, as specified in [paragraph 1.2.1](#) of this Regulation, unless they have successfully completed module 1 of the *Postgraduate Certificate Research Methods* (or approved alternative).
- 9.1.5 A research student shall normally be examined orally on the programme of research and on the field of study in which the programme lies. Where, for reasons of sickness, disability or comparable valid cause, the Research Degrees Committee is satisfied that a research student would be at a serious disadvantage if required to undergo an oral examination, an alternative form of examination may be approved. Such approval shall not be given on the ground that the research student's knowledge of the language in which the thesis is presented is inadequate.
- 9.1.6 The degrees of MSc by Research, MRes, MPhil, PhD and Professional Doctorates may be awarded posthumously on the evidence of a thesis completed by a research student and deemed ready for examination by his/her Principal Supervisor. In such cases, the Research Degrees Committee shall seek evidence of the probability of the research student's success in the oral component of the examination.
- 9.1.7 Where evidence of academic or research misconduct in the preparation of the thesis or in the conduct of the examination becomes available subsequent to the examiners presenting their recommendation, the Research Degrees Committee shall consider the matter, if necessary in consultation with the examiners, and take appropriate action.
- 9.1.8 The Research Degrees Committee shall ensure, through the appointment of an Internal Convener, that all examinations are conducted and the recommendations of the examiners are presented in accordance with the requirements of the University Regulations. Where the Research Degrees Committee is made aware of a failure to comply with the specified procedures, it may declare the examination invalid and appoint new examiners.
- 9.1.9 The Principal Supervisor may attend an oral examination as an observer only with the prior written consent of the research student.

## 9.2 Examination Arrangements

### Approval of Examination Teams

- 9.2.1 The Research Degrees Committee shall approve and appoint examiners for each research student.

### Composition of Examination Teams

- 9.2.2 With the exception of members of staff, as specified in [paragraph 9.2.6](#) of this Regulation, a research student shall normally be examined by two examiners who shall be:

- an external examiner;
- an internal examiner, a member of University staff not associated with the research student's supervisory team.

9.2.3 Any variation from this composition shall require the prior approval of the Research Degrees Committee.

9.2.4 Where the research student is a member of academic or professional support staff of the University, the examining team shall normally consist of two external examiners, and one internal examiner. Any variation from this composition shall require the prior approval of the Research Degrees Committee.

### **Criteria for the Appointment of Examiners**

9.2.5 No research student shall act as an examiner.

9.2.6 Examiners shall be experienced in research in the general area of the research student's thesis and, where practicable, shall have specialist experience in the particular topic(s) that are the subject of examination.

9.2.7 Normally, at least one examiner shall have participated in three or more previous higher degree examinations; in an examination for the award of the degree of PhD, at least one examiner shall have experience of examining at that level.

9.2.8 An external examiner shall not have acted previously as the research student's supervisor or adviser; normally, he/she shall not be either a supervisor of another research student nor an external examiner on a taught course in the same School/Department/Centre during the preceding five years.

9.2.9 All external and internal examiners, prior to appointment, will be required to make full disclosure and declaration of any interests that could give rise to an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest in relation to his/her proposed appointment as an examiner. Any external examiners shall be clearly independent of both the University and of any collaborating establishment and shall not have been in the employment of the University or, where relevant, of a collaborating establishment during a period of two years prior to his/her appointment. The Research Degrees Committee shall ensure that an external examiner is not appointed with such frequency that his/her familiarity with the University might be considered prejudicial to objective judgement.

### **Responsibilities of Examiners**

9.2.10 Examiners shall submit all reports and/or recommendations to the Research Degrees Committee on the appropriate forms and within agreed timescales.

9.2.11 Prior to any oral examination (or approved alternative), each examiner shall read and examine the thesis and submit an independent report using the *Examiner Preliminary Report (RDExamA)* form to the Secretary of the Research Degrees Committee no later than seven days prior to the oral examination (or approved alternative). In preparing such a preliminary report, each examiner shall consider whether the thesis satisfies the

requirements of the degree and, where possible, make a provisional recommendation subject to the outcome of the oral examination (or approved alternative).

### 9.3 Examination Responsibilities

#### Examination Responsibilities – Study Coordinator

9.3.1 It shall be the responsibility of a research student's Study Coordinator, who is an existing member of the supervisory team based at the University, to organise the arrangements for the research student's examination, including completion and submission of appropriate forms prior to the examination, and confirming the examination date and venue to the Research Degrees Office. Such arrangements shall be submitted using the *Examination Arrangements (RDE)* form to the Research Degrees Committee at least three months prior to the examination date stated in the *Examination Arrangements (RDE)* form; the examination may not take place without formal approval of the arrangements by the Research Degrees Committee. Where the Committee deems it appropriate, the Committee itself may act directly to appoint examiners and arrange the examination of a research student.

#### Examination Responsibilities – Research Degrees Office

9.3.2 The Secretary of the Research Degrees Committee is responsible for informing the research student of the specified procedure and requirements for the submission of the thesis together with any particular conditions that the research student is required to satisfy before he/she is eligible for examination.

9.3.3 The Secretary of the Research Degrees Committee is responsible for ensuring examiners are fully briefed on the duties that they are required to perform, and for sending appropriate documentation to the examiners including:

- one copy of the research student's thesis;
- the *Examiner Preliminary Report (RDEExamA)* or *Examiner Preliminary Report – Re-Examination (RDEExamAR)* form;
- and a copy of the relevant University Regulations and *Assessment Criteria*.

9.3.4 The Secretary of the Research Degrees Committee shall request that all the examiners complete the *Examiner Preliminary Report (RDEExamA)* or *Examiner Preliminary Report – Re-Examination (RDEExamAR)* forms independently and then return them to him/her no later than seven days prior to the oral examination (or approved alternative).

9.3.5 The Secretary of the Research Degrees Committee is responsible for notifying the research student, the Study Coordinator, and the examiners, of the date of the oral examination (or approved alternative).

#### Examination Responsibilities – Internal Convener

9.3.6 On the day of the oral examination (or approved alternative), the Internal Convener will have the following responsibilities:

- to manage the operation of the oral examination meeting;
- to ensure compliance with University Regulations, policies and procedures;
- to ensure the *Examiner Final Report (RDEExamB)* or *Examiner Final Report – Re-Examination (RDEExamBR)* form, as appropriate, is completed;
- to facilitate discussion where consensus is desirable, but not to arbitrate in any respect.

#### 9.4 Research Student's Responsibilities for the Examination

It shall be the responsibility of the research student to:

- (i) satisfy any conditions attaching to eligibility for examination prescribed by the Research Degrees Committee;
- (ii) to ensure the thesis is submitted for examination before the expiry date of the period of registration as specified in [paragraph 5.3](#) of this Regulation, subject to any formal extension granted by the Research Degrees Committee;
- (iii) solely determine when to submit the thesis, whether or not such submission is made with the approval of the research student's supervisor(s). A research student should not assume the supervisor's agreement to the submission of the thesis ensures its approval by the examiners.
- (iv) take no part in the arrangement of the examination and have no formal contact with the examiners before the oral examination (or approved alternative);
- (v) complete the *Research Student's Self-Declaration (RDDecl)* form in which he/she shall confirm that the content of the thesis has not been submitted for a comparable academic award, to be accompanied by a summary report issued from the Turnitin Originality Checking system. A research student shall not be precluded from incorporating in a thesis covering a wider area of study, work which has already been submitted for a degree or comparable award, provided that such incorporated work is specified in the *Research Student's Self-Declaration (RDDecl)* form and clearly indicated in the thesis.
- (vi) ensure that the presentation of the thesis is in accordance with the requirements of [Schedule 6.1](#) of this Regulation. One copy of the thesis for each examiner shall be presented and, where in printed format, these shall be soft-bound in an approved form before the degree may be awarded. A thesis submitted in a temporary bound form shall be, in all other respects, in its final form; in such cases, the research student shall formally confirm in writing that, except where amendments have been made to satisfy the requirements of the examiners, the contents of the permanently bound thesis are identical with the copies submitted for examination.

## 9.5 Recommendations of the Examiners - First Examination

9.5.1 Authority to confer a research degree rests with the University's Academic Council.

9.5.2 At the conclusion of the examination and assessment procedure and where the **examiners are in agreement**, they shall make one of the following recommendations to the Research Degrees Committee:

(i) **Award**

The research student be awarded the degree.

This outcome applies to theses which require no amendment following the oral examination, or where minor presentational amendments are to be made to the thesis within one month, regardless of study mode.

(ii) **Award with Amendments**

The research student be awarded the degree subject to amendments being made to the thesis (no re-examination required) to the satisfaction of the internal and/or external examiner.

The research student shall receive written guidance from the examiners, describing the deficiencies of the thesis and/or the reasons for their recommendation, from the Secretary of the Research Degrees Committee. The research student shall complete the amendments within three to six months of receiving the examiners' guidance, regardless of study mode.

(iii) **Fail and Re-Examination**

The research student be subject to a re-examination and be permitted to re-submit the thesis and be subject to a further oral examination (or approved alternative).

The research student shall receive written guidance from the examiners, describing the deficiencies of the thesis and/or the reasons for their recommendation, from the Secretary of the Research Degrees Committee. The research student shall complete the corrections and submit for re-examination within 12 months (full-time study mode) or 18 months (part-time study mode) of receiving the examiners' written guidance from the Secretary of the Research Degrees Committee.

(iv) **Fail and submit for re-examination for lower exit award**

(In the case of a professional doctorate the exit awards are defined in the Course Specification).

The research student shall receive written guidance from the examiners, describing the deficiencies of the thesis and/or the reasons for their recommendation, from the Secretary of the Research Degrees Committee. Regardless of study mode, the research student shall complete the corrections within three to six months of receiving the examiners' written guidance. The corrected thesis is submitted to the Research Degrees Office for issue to the examiners. The examiners may recommend the research student be awarded the lower exit award, where the thesis has been amended both to their satisfaction and in accordance with the assessment criteria for the lower award. from the Secretary of the Research Degrees Committee, regardless of study mode.

(v) **Fail**

The research student not be awarded a degree and no re-examination be permitted.

The examiners shall prepare an agreed statement of the deficiencies of the thesis and the reasons for their recommendation for issue to the research student by the Secretary of the Research Degrees Committee.

9.5.3 At the conclusion of the oral examination (or approved alternative) and where the **examiners are in agreement**, the Internal Convener shall coordinate the completion of the *Examiner Final Report (RDEExamB)* form and submission to the Secretary of the Research Degrees Committee stating their recommendation in accordance with [paragraph 9.5.2](#) of this Regulation. Where the examiners consider that it might be helpful, they may consult the Convener of the Research Degrees Committee before the recommendations are finalised in order to ensure that the outcome conforms to the University's Regulations.

9.5.4 Where the **examiners are in agreement**, the Convener of the Research Degrees Committee is authorised to submit the joint recommendation to Academic Council for approval.

9.5.5 Where the **examiners are not in agreement** with regard to the recommendation, the Internal Convener shall coordinate the preparation of the *Examiner Final Report (RDEExamB)* form and submit this to the Secretary of the Research Degrees Committee. Thereafter, the Research Degrees Committee may:

- (i) accept a majority recommendation, provided that such recommendation includes the views of at least one external examiner;
- (ii) accept the recommendation of the external examiner;
- (iii) require the appointment of an additional external examiner.

9.5.6 Where an additional external examiner is appointed in accordance with the provisions of [paragraph 9.5.5\(iii\)](#) of this Regulation, he/she shall prepare an *Examiner Preliminary Report (RDEExamA)* form on the thesis and, where he/she considers it necessary, conduct a further oral examination (or approved alternative). The additional external examiner shall not be informed of the opinions or recommendations of the other examiners. On receipt of the *Examiner Preliminary Report (RDEExamA)* form from the additional external examiner, the Research Degrees Committee shall complete the examination procedure in accordance with the provisions of [paragraph 9.5](#) of this Regulation.

## 9.6 Re-Examination

9.6.1 Research students for the award of the degrees of MSc by Research, MRes, MPhil, PhD and Professional Doctorates shall be permitted only one opportunity for re-examination. Such re-examination shall be subject to the following requirements:

- (i) the research student's re-examination shall have the approval of the Research Degrees Committee;

- (ii) subsequent to the first examination, the research student shall have received written guidance provided by the examiners on the deficiencies of the thesis and/or the reasons for their recommendation;
- (iii) the submission for re-examination shall normally be by a specified date to be determined by the examiners, taking account of the research student's mode of study, but no later than one calendar year or part-time equivalent from the date the research student is issued with the examiners' written guidance by the Secretary of the Research Degrees Committee. Where the Research Degrees Committee is satisfied that reasonable cause exists, it may approve an extension to this period;
- (iv) the payment of a re-examination fee as determined by the University from time to time, details of which are available from the Student Finance Office.

9.6.2 The Research Degrees Committee may require that an additional external examiner be appointed for the re-examination.

9.6.3 There shall be two forms of re-examination:

- (i) the re-examination of the re-submitted thesis after **major corrections** and a further oral examination (or approved alternative);
- (ii) the holding of a form of examination specifically designed to test particular areas of the research student's ability and/or knowledge; such examination may only be introduced on the recommendation of the Research Degrees Committee.

9.6.4 In the case of re-examination under the provisions of [paragraphs 9.6.3\(i\)](#) above, each examiner shall read and examine the thesis and independently submit the *Examiner Preliminary Report – Re-Examination (RDEExamAR)* form to the Secretary of the Research Degrees Committee no later than seven days prior to the oral examination (or approved alternative). Such reports shall state whether the thesis satisfies the requirements of the degree and, where possible, make an appropriate recommendation subject to the outcome of any oral examination (or approved alternative).



## Recommendations of the Examiners – Re-Examination

- 9.6.5 At the conclusion of the re-examination and where the **examiners are in agreement**, they shall make one of the following recommendations to the Research Degrees Committee:
- (i) The research student be awarded the degree.
  - (ii) The research student:
    - be awarded the degree subject to **minor** amendments being made to the thesis; and
    - will receive, from the Secretary of the Research Degrees Committee, written guidance provided by the examiners on the required amendments; and
    - to submit the amended thesis by a specified date to be determined by the examiners, taking account of the research student's mode of study, but no later than one calendar year or part-time equivalent from the date the research student is issued with the examiners' written guidance by the Secretary of the Research Degrees Committee.
  - (iii) In the case of re-examination for the degree of PhD, the research student be awarded the degree of MSc by Research, MRes or MPhil subject to the presentation of the thesis being amended to the satisfaction of the examiners, with the amended thesis being submitted by a specified date to be determined by the examiners, taking account of the research student's mode of study, but no later than one calendar year or part-time equivalent from the date the research student is issued with the examiners' written guidance by the Secretary of the Research Degrees Committee.
  - (iv) In the case of re-examination for the degree of MPhil, the research student be awarded the degree of MSc by Research or MRes subject to the presentation of the thesis amended to the satisfaction of the examiners, with the amended thesis being submitted by a specified date to be determined by the examiners, taking account of the research student's mode of study, but no later than one calendar year or part-time equivalent from the date the research student is issued with the examiners' written guidance by the Secretary of the Research Degrees Committee.
  - (v) In the case of a re-examination for a Professional Doctorate, the research student be awarded an appropriate exit award as defined in the Course Specification.
  - (vi) the research student not be awarded the degree and, in accordance with the provisions of [paragraph 9.6.1](#) of this Regulation, no re-examination be permitted. Where the examiners recommend no degree be awarded, the examiners shall prepare an agreed statement of the deficiencies of the thesis and the reasons for their recommendation. The agreed statement shall be communicated to the research student in writing by the Secretary of the Research Degrees Committee.



- 9.6.6 On completion of the re-examination procedure and where the **examiners are, or are not, in agreement**, the Internal Convener shall coordinate the completion of the *Examiner Final Report – Re-Examination (RDEExamBR)* form and submission to the Secretary of the Research Degrees Committee stating their recommendation in accordance with [paragraph 9.6.5](#) of this Regulation. Where the examiners consider that it might be helpful, they may consult the Convener of the Research Degrees Committee before the recommendations are finalised in order to ensure that the outcome conforms to the University's Regulations.
- 9.6.7 Where the **examiners are not in agreement** with regard to the recommendation, the Research Degrees Committee may:
- (i) accept a majority recommendation, provided that such recommendation includes the views of at least one external examiner; or
  - (ii) accept the recommendation of the external examiner; or
  - (iii) require the appointment of an additional external examiner.
- 9.6.8 Where an additional external examiner is appointed in accordance with the provisions of [paragraph 9.6.7\(iii\)](#) of this Regulation, he/she shall prepare an independent *Examiner Preliminary Report – Re-Examination (RDEExamAR)* form on the basis of the thesis and, where he/she considers it necessary, may conduct a further oral examination (or approved alternative). The additional external examiner shall not be informed of the views or recommendations of the other examiners. On receipt of the *Examiner Preliminary Report – Re-Examination (RDEExamAR)* form from the additional external examiner, the Research Degrees Committee shall complete the re-examination procedure in accordance with the provisions of [paragraph 9.6.6](#) of this Regulation.

## 10. RESEARCH DEGREES APPEAL PROCEDURE

### 10.1 Applicability of the Research Degrees Appeal Procedure

This Procedure shall apply to all enrolled research students of the University wishing to appeal:

- (i) an examination decision of the Research Degrees Committee, made on the recommendation of the examiners either for the first examination or a re-examination; or
- (ii) a decision of the Research Degrees Committee to terminate the research student's registration and/or enrolment;
- (iii) a decision of the Research Degrees Committee to refuse a transfer of registration to PhD following a second unsuccessful attempt.

### 10.2 Grounds of Appeal

10.2.1 The *Student Appeals Committee* has delegated powers from Academic Council to consider and make decisions on its behalf with regard to appeals by research students.

10.2.2 The University is not obliged to review such decisions, and nor has it conferred on any research student the right of appeal to Academic Council. However, Academic Council shall, through the *Student Appeals Committee*, consider appeals on the following grounds:

- (i) the research student's performance was adversely affected by illness or other factors which he/she was unable for valid reasons to divulge to the School, Department, Centre, examiners or Research Degrees Committee (as appropriate) prior to the decision being made; and/or
- (ii) there had been a material administrative error, or that the examination was not conducted in accordance with the current Research Degree Regulations, or that some other irregularity which materially affected the examination or decision of the Research Degrees Committee had occurred.

Disagreement with the academic judgement of the examiners or the Research Degrees Committee cannot constitute grounds for appeal.

### 10.3 Research Degrees Appeal Procedure – Stage 1: Submission of Appeal

10.3.1 The research student (hereafter known as the appellant) wishing to appeal an examination decision, decision to terminate registration/enrolment, or a decision to refuse transfer, shall complete the *Student Appeal Form: Research Degrees*, confirming the grounds which form the basis for the appeal and which shall be competent only where they accord with the provisions of [paragraph 10.2](#). The appellant shall lodge the *Student Appeal Form: Research Degrees* with the Graduate School as soon as possible after receipt of the notification of the decision and normally no later than 28 days after receipt of the decision. It shall be the responsibility of the appellant to inform the Graduate School of the address to which communications should be addressed or at which he/she can be contacted. All written communications to an appellant shall be sent by first class mail and email.

10.3.2 Should the appellant make any alteration to the grounds of his/her appeal at any time after its initial lodgement, the appeal shall be deemed invalid; an appellant shall not be permitted to lodge more than one appeal against an examination decision or termination decision or transfer decision by the Research Degrees Committee.

### 10.4 Research Degrees Appeal Procedure – Stage 2: Prima Facie Case

10.4.1 An appeal shall first be considered by the Deputy Academic Registrar who, in consultation with the Assistant Chief Academic Officer, shall determine whether a *prima facie* case for an appeal exists. A *prima facie* case shall exist where relevant evidence to support the grounds of appeal, as defined in [paragraph 10.2](#) of this Regulation, has been produced.

- (i) Where it is deemed that no *prima facie* case exists, the Assistant Chief Academic Officer and Deputy Academic Registrar shall submit a recommendation to the Principal that the case be dismissed.

- (ii) Where it is deemed a *prima facie* case exists, the Assistant Chief Academic Officer and Deputy Academic Registrar shall submit a recommendation to the Principal that the case be referred to the *Student Appeals Committee* for consideration.

10.4.2 Where it is deemed by the Principal that no *prima facie* case exists, the Principal shall dismiss the appeal. There shall be no appeal against such a decision of the Principal. The Deputy Academic Registrar, or nominee, shall communicate the Principal's decision to the appellant in writing within 10 working days of receiving the *Student Appeal Form: Research Degrees*; the Deputy Academic Registrar, or nominee, shall also communicate the Principal's decision to the Head of School and the Head of the Graduate School .

10.4.3 Where it is deemed by the Principal that a *prima facie* case exists, the Principal shall refer the case to the *Student Appeals Committee* for consideration. The Deputy Academic Registrar, or nominee, shall communicate the Principal's decision to the appellant in writing, together with details of the procedure to be adopted by the *Student Appeals Committee*, normally within 10 working days of the Assistant Chief Academic Officer receiving the *Student Appeal Form: Research Degrees*; the Deputy Academic Registrar, or nominee, shall also communicate the Principal's decision to the Convener of the *Student Appeals Committee*.

### 10.5 Research Degrees Appeal Procedure – Stage 3: Student Appeals Committee

10.5.1 The Student Appeals Committee shall have a quorum of four, and shall consist of three senior academic members of staff\* from outwith the School(s) involved in the appeal (one of whom to be the Convener, selected by the Committee's Secretary), and a Student Union President.

The Student Appeals Committee shall reach decisions only by consensus.

The Secretary to the Committee shall be the Deputy Academic Registrar, (*or nominee*); the Secretary shall not be a member of the Committee.

\* For consideration of non-academic misconduct appeals, senior representatives from support services may be used

10.5.2 No student or research student shall be a member of the *Student Appeals Committee* and no member of the Committee shall have had previous involvement in the case subject to review.

10.5.3 Where it is considered there is a *prima facie* case, the Secretary of the *Student Appeals Committee* shall gather such evidence as considered appropriate and likely to assist the *Student Appeals Committee* in reviewing the case. The Secretary of the *Student Appeals Committee* shall confirm to the research student in writing the date, time and venue of the meeting of the *Student Appeals Committee* at least 10 working days prior to the meeting and issuing such correspondence by first class mail and email. The meeting shall be convened normally, and where possible, within 20 working days of notification to the appellant that a *prima facie* case is established.

10.5.4 If the appellant fails to attend but has provided good reason for non-attendance, then a further meeting shall be arranged, the arrangements for which shall also be confirmed in writing to all interested parties, and the appellant informed that the meeting will proceed in his/her absence if necessary, without this constituting grounds for appeal.

10.5.5 In considering an appeal, the *Student Appeals Committee* shall be subject to the following conditions:

- (i) the appellant shall be required to appear before the Committee;
- (ii) the appellant shall be entitled to be accompanied by two persons;
- (iii) the appellant and those accompanying him/her shall be entitled to address the Committee;
- (iv) the appellant shall be entitled to call witnesses;
- (v) the Committee shall be entitled to call witnesses and to require members of academic staff of the University to attend before the Committee for the purpose of examination in connection with any matter subject to the Committee's consideration.

10.5.6 The courses of action available to the *Student Appeals Committee* shall be as stated:

- (i) Where the Committee is not satisfied a case has been established, it shall dismiss the appeal.
- (ii) (a) Examination decision: where the Committee is satisfied a case has been established, the appeal shall be upheld, and the Committee shall make recommendations to the Research Degrees Committee in respect of the appropriate arrangements for re-examination in accordance with the provisions of [paragraph 9.6](#) of this Regulation;
- (b) Termination decision: where the Committee is satisfied a case has been established, the appeal shall be upheld, and the Committee shall make recommendations to the Research Degrees Committee in respect of the appropriate arrangements to permit the research student to resume studies;
- (c) Transfer decision: where the Committee is satisfied a case has been established, the appeal shall be upheld, and the Committee shall make recommendations to the Research Degrees Committee in respect of the appropriate arrangements to permit the research student one further and final opportunity to transfer.

10.5.7 The Convener of the *Student Appeals Committee* shall issue a written notification of the outcome to the appellant within five working days of the meeting. In respect of the University's internal procedure for *Research Degrees Appeal Procedure*, the decision of the *Student Appeals Committee* shall be final. Thereafter, the research student may refer to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's independent public services complaints system, as contained in [Regulation A3: Student Conduct and Appeals, Section 1, paragraph 12](#).

## 10.6 Distribution and Retention of Records – Research Degree Appeals

### 10.6.1 *Student Appeals Committee* – Distribution of Outcome

- (i) All records, whether in paper or electronic form, documenting the handling and outcome of Research Degree Appeals by a research student shall be retained in the Research Degrees Office’s student file.
- (ii) The Convener of the *Student Appeals Committee* shall distribute a copy of the Committee’s report to:
  - the Head of School and Head of the Graduate School, for retention in the School’s student file;
  - the Deputy Academic Registrar for retention in the central appeals file.
- (iii) The Convener of the *Student Appeals Committee* shall report the outcome of the appeal to those other Professional Support Departments to which the case relates, which might include any or all of the following: the Academic Administration Department, the Estates and Property Services Department, the Financial Services Department, the IT Services Department and the Library.

### 10.6.2 Retention of Records

All records, whether in paper or electronic form, documenting the handling and outcome of Research Degree Appeals by a student shall be retained for six years from the date the case concluded, and thereafter destroyed, unless otherwise required by a relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body to retain such records for a longer specified period.

### 10.6.3 Reporting to Academic Council

The Deputy Academic Registrar shall maintain a central record of all appeal decisions by the *Student Appeals Committee* and report these annually to Academic Council.

## 11. THE AWARD OF PHD BY PUBLIC OUTPUT

### 11.1 Applicability

Any full-time or part-time member of staff of the University or affiliated research institution, if they have been a member of staff for a minimum of three years, shall be eligible to apply to register for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by Public Output, and will be subject to the provisions of this Regulation, except as specified in the following paragraphs.

### 11.2 Registration and Approval of the Portfolio of Public Output

11.2.1 The public output candidate shall submit an application to register for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by Public Output to the Research Degrees Committee.

#### 11.2.2 The application shall:

- (i) identify the intended number of public outputs on which the candidature is to be based, between 3 and 7 as appropriate to the subject discipline;
- (ii) list the intended refereed journals/publications/publishers, as appropriate and on which the candidature is to be based, and which should be of an appropriately high quality and standard;
- (iii) list any existing public output produced more than 5 years before the intended date of submission and on which the candidature is to be based, without these constituting a majority of the total public outputs being submitted;
- (iv) a preliminary statement giving details of where and when the research on which the works were based was undertaken;
- (v) the intended word count of the thesis as appropriate to the subject discipline; and
- (vi) an outline discussion (of 3,000 words) of the contribution of the public output to the advancement of the field of study.

### 11.3 Period of Registration

11.3.1 The maximum period of registration will be 6 years.

11.3.2 There shall be no backdating of the date of registration.

### 11.4 Supervision

11.4.1 The Research Degrees Committee shall approve and appoint two research-active supervisors for each public output candidate, one of whom one shall be a member of staff of the University. One supervisor shall be appointed Principal Supervisor with formal responsibility for the public output candidate's supervision.

11.4.2 The supervisory team shall normally have combined experience of supervising not less than three PhD research students to successful completion. At least one member of the supervisory team shall have supervised two or more PhD research students to successful completion.

11.4.3 The supervisory team, in particular the Study Coordinator, shall be required to identify any training needs of the public output candidate through the *Annual Monitoring Process*; and to advise and assist in the preparation of the final submission.

### 11.5 The Thesis and the Portfolio of Public Output

11.5.1 After a minimum period of registration of one year, the public output candidate shall submit to the Secretary of the Research Degrees Committee a thesis and the portfolio of public output as prescribed below.

(i) **The Thesis**

This shall be a supporting documentary thesis declaring the underlying philosophy of the PhD submission, and which shall be capable of standing alone as a document in its own right. The text of the thesis shall normally be no more than approximately 10,000 words. The portfolio of public output shall be an appendix to the thesis.

Furthermore, the thesis shall include, or be accompanied by, as appropriate, the following:

- (a) a list of the public output on which the application is based;
- (b) details of when and where the research on which the application is based was undertaken;
- (c) a discussion of the contribution and impact made by the works submitted to the general advancement of the field of study and research concerned; a common theme must be demonstrated;
- (d) a demonstration that the work constitutes an independent and original contribution to knowledge;
- (e) an abstract of approximately 300 words which provides a synopsis of the content, stating the nature and scope of the work undertaken together with the contribution made to the knowledge of the subject treated, and with the following headings:
  - the name of the author;
  - the degree for which the thesis is submitted; and
  - the title of the thesis;
- (f) a completed *Research Student's Self-Declaration (RDDecl)* form in which he/she shall confirm that the content of the thesis has not been submitted for a comparable academic award, and a summary report issued from the Turnitin Originality Checking system. A research student shall not be precluded from incorporating in a thesis covering a wider area of study, work which has already been submitted for a degree or comparable award, provided that such incorporated work is specified in the *Research Student's Self-Declaration (RDDecl)* form and clearly indicated in the thesis.;
- (g) where a public output candidate submits output produced in conjunction with others, a statement specifying what proportion of the work was carried out personally by the public output candidate; this must be accompanied by signed statements by co-authors (or equivalent) to verify the share of the work claimed by the public output candidate;
- (h) a review of the current literature, unless incorporated into publications;

- (i) other public output in support of the application may be appended, if the public output candidate so wishes.

(ii) **Portfolio of Public Output**

The portfolio shall consist of public output which conforms to the following requirements:

- (a) the portfolio shall extend over a period of not less than 5 years from the date of publication of the earliest item to the submission date;
- (b) any public output jointly-authored with a research student supervised by the public output candidate shall not be double counted and shall not compromise either the integrity of the PhD by public output or the research student's PhD;
- (c) every item of public output included in the portfolio shall have been subject to peer review;
- (d) the items of public output included in the portfolio must be supportive of a case for coherent research development in line with that required for a traditional degree of PhD and shall, therefore, be consistent with a single research question and hypothesis;
- (f) the work directly associated with the research shall be demonstrably equivalent to the 540 credits at the appropriate level required for a degree of PhD.

11.5.2 In accordance with [paragraph 9.1.1](#) of this Regulation, the examination for the award of PhD by public output shall have two stages:

- (i) the submission and preliminary assessment;
- (ii) the defence of the submission by oral examination (or approved alternative).

## 11.6 Examiners

A candidate for the award of PhD by public output shall be examined by three examiners: an internal examiner who shall be a member of University staff not associated with the supervisory team; and two external examiners.

## 11.7 First Examination

11.7.1 In examining the public output candidate, the examiners must determine whether:

- (i) the works submitted demonstrate that the public output candidate has carried out a programme of study and research at least comparable with that required to prepare a PhD thesis in the field concerned;



- (ii) the submission demonstrates that the public output candidate possesses research skills;
- (iii) the submission demonstrates that the public output candidate has personally made a systematic study;
- (iv) the public output candidate has shown originality by exercise of independent critical powers and has made a distinct contribution to knowledge.

11.7.2 At the conclusion of the examination, where the examiners are in agreement they shall recommend to the Research Degrees Committee that:

- (i) the public output candidate be awarded the degree of PhD;
- (ii) the public output candidate be awarded the degree subject to amendments being made;
- (iii) the public output candidate not be awarded the degree.

11.7.3 In the event of disagreement between the examiners, the normal procedures, according to [paragraph 9.5.5](#) of this Regulation, shall apply.

11.7.4 Following the award of the degree, the Secretary of the Research Degrees Committee shall lodge one copy each of the thesis and portfolio of public output in the University Library, and one copy with the Principal Supervisor.

11.7.5 A re-application for the award of PhD by public output shall only be made by a candidate after a period of five years following the previous examination. Only one re-application per candidate shall be made.

11.7.6 All other issues, concerning such matters as appeals, and restricted access (if relevant) shall be as specified by this Regulation.

## SCHEDULE 6.1: SPECIFICATION FOR THESIS SUBMISSION

### 1. TEXT

The text of the thesis, excluding ancillary data, shall not normally exceed the following guidelines:

(i) SCIENCE, ENGINEERING, ART AND DESIGN:

Degree of PhD	:	40,000 words
Degree of MPhil	:	20,000 words
Degree of MSc	:	15,000 words

(ii) ARTS, SOCIAL SCIENCES AND EDUCATION:

Degree of PhD	:	80,000 words
Degree of MPhil	:	40,000 words
Degree of MSc	:	30,000 words

Where the thesis is accompanied by material in other than written form or the research involves creative writing or the preparation of a scholarly edition, the written thesis shall normally be within the range:

Degree of PhD	:	30,000 - 40,000 words
Degree of MPhil	:	15,000 - 20,000 words
Degree of MSc	:	10,000 - 15,000 words

### 2. FORMAT

Theses may be submitted in electronic format or in print plus electronic format in accordance with the following:

(a) **Electronic Format**

- (i) Theses shall be produced using appropriate software packages which, where possible, are in common use within the University. The research student shall consult with the University Library at an early stage on the presentation and software for the thesis.
- (ii) Theses shall be produced in a format that allows the document to be electronically archived, for example through conversion into a PDF or XML file.
- (iii) Where theses contain specialised electronic elements (e.g. interactive formulae, or audio-visual clips), students may seek advice from the University Library if they wish to embed this information into the main file.

Examples of e-theses can be viewed in the RGU Open Access Institutional Repository (*OpenAIR*) at <https://openair.rgu.ac.uk/>.

(b) **Printed Format**

- (i) The thesis shall normally be A4 size.
- (ii) The thesis shall be presented in font size 11.
- (iii) The thesis shall be printed double-sided; the paper shall be white and within the range 70g/m<sup>2</sup> to 100g/m<sup>2</sup>.
- (iv) Mirror margins should be used, with the inside margin no less than 35mm, and the outside margin no less than 15mm.
- (v) One-and-a-half spacing shall be used in the typescript except for indented quotations or footnotes where single spacing may be used.
- (vi) Pages shall be numbered consecutively throughout the text including photographs/diagrams included as whole pages.

(c) **Title Page**

The title page of each thesis shall give the following information:

- (i) the full title of the thesis;
- (ii) the full name of the author;
- (iii) that the degree is awarded by the University;
- (iv) the award for which the degree is submitted in partial fulfilment of its requirement;
- (v) the collaborating establishment (if any);
- (vi) the month and year of submission.

(d) **Abstract**

In accordance with [paragraph 8](#) of this Regulation, an abstract of the thesis of approximately 300 words shall be submitted. The abstract shall state the nature and scope of the work undertaken, together with the contribution made to the knowledge of the subject treated and shall have as a heading:

the name of the author;  
the degree for which the thesis is submitted; and  
the title of the thesis.

### 3. THE FINAL COPY

- (i) Where the thesis is produced in printed format:
  - (a) one copy of the final, approved, version should be made available for the Principal Supervisor. The binding shall be black in colour and of a fixed type so that leaves cannot be removed or replaced; the front and rear boards shall have sufficient rigidity to support the weight of the work when standing upright. The outside front board shall bear the title of the work, the name and initials of the candidate, the qualification and the year of submission; the same information (excluding the title of the work) shall be shown on the spine of the work, reading downwards. Such information shall be printed to a minimum size of 24pt type.
  - (b) An electronic copy of the thesis, in a format such as Microsoft Word, together with accompanying media, shall also be submitted. Selected material may be excluded from the electronic version prior to being made accessible from the University's repository or a web page (e.g. copies of published articles involving copyright issues or copies of letters with personal data/data protection issues). These items should be attached as appendices at the end of the paper version and referred to in the electronic version.
- (ii) Where the thesis is produced in digital format, a copy of the final, approved version should be made available to the University Library, in accordance with the provisions of [paragraph 2](#) of this Schedule.
- (iii) On submission of the thesis, each student shall be required to complete a form to:
  - (a) confirm that their work does not contain any copyright material other than their own or that for which they have written permission to reproduce and make available via web pages;
  - (b) grant the University permission to make the thesis available on its web pages and as part of a British Library central repository (web-based or print-based), or place an embargo on their work appearing on web pages for a specified period. An application for an embargo should provide a specific reason, such as a patent pending, and must be submitted to the Research Degrees Committee for approval. Authors who make their thesis available in the University's repository and the British Library's *ETHOS* repository retain the right to publish their work elsewhere at a future date.

## SCHEDULE 6.2: TEN INSTANCES OF EXPECTED CONTACT

The following shall apply to all research students enrolled and registered with the University:

1. Successful completion of the enrolment process, including passport checks and financial payments.
2. Attendance at module 1 of the *Postgraduate Certificate Research Methods*.
3. Oral presentation completed for module 1 of the *Postgraduate Certificate Research Methods*.
4. First month of attendance, including meetings with the Principal Supervisor (recommended on a weekly basis), and undertaking induction by the School/Department/Centre.
5. Second month of attendance, including meetings with the Supervisory Team (recommended on a weekly basis).
6. Submission of all courseworks for module 1 of the *Postgraduate Certificate Research Methods*.
7. Third month of attendance, including meetings with the Supervisory Team (recommended on a fortnightly basis).
8. Preparation and submission of the *Research Degree Registration (RDR)* form and *Research Ethics: Student and Supervisor Assessment (RESSA)* form.
9. Fourth month of attendance, including meetings with the Supervisory Team (recommended on a fortnightly basis).
10. Fifth month of attendance, including meetings with the Supervisory Team (recommended on a fortnightly basis).

Ongoing targets may include (but are not limited to):

- continued monthly attendance and meetings, or equivalent, with the Supervisory Team;
- completion of the *Annual Progress Report (RSR)* form;
- attendance at module 2 of the *Postgraduate Certificate Research Methods* between 12-24 months, depending on mode of attendance;
- successful completion of module 2 of the *Postgraduate Certificate Research Methods*;
- successful completion of the transfer application to PhD.

### SCHEDULE 6.3: PENALTIES – RESEARCH MISCONDUCT (RESEARCH DEGREES)

Taking into account the severity of the breach of discipline, the research student's admission of guilt, and whether or not the breach is a first or subsequent incidence of misconduct, one or more of the following penalties may be applied (refer also to [Regulation A3, Section 2, paragraph 10](#)):

- Penalty 1:**                    **Reprimand:** Written warning, retained by the Head of School/Head of the Graduate School in the research student file. This penalty would be appropriate only if University staff were satisfied the misconduct was an innocent and unique transgression, and the first known case of academic misconduct.
- Penalty 2:**                    **Exclusion of work + opportunity to redo:** Exclusion of affected work and opportunity for the work to be redone within a specified period.
- Penalty 3:**                    **Exclusion of work + no opportunity to redo:** Exclusion of affected work and no opportunity for the work to be redone.
- Penalty 4:**                    **Suspension for specified period:** A recommendation to the Principal (or a nominee to whom such authority has been delegated) for the immediate suspension of enrolment, registration and all corresponding rights of the research student, including the use of University facilities, and which may also include denial of access to University properties, for a specified period.
- Penalty 5:**                    **Termination of Enrolment:** A recommendation to the Principal (or a nominee to whom such authority has been delegated) for the immediate exclusion from the University's facilities and properties, and the immediate discontinuation of studies and withdrawal of enrolment, registration and all corresponding rights of the research student. This recommendation shall be automatic in the case of a second proven case of misconduct, where both cases have been classified as academic/research misconduct, or both classified as non-academic misconduct. This recommendation may include a request to permanently deny the research student any future rights of application and enrolment to the University.

Where misconduct is alleged or suspected, a research student may not use as a defence the failure by the supervisor (or any other member of the academic staff) to detect misconduct at an earlier stage.