

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.

In the case of doctoral degrees, research students shall be expected to:

- *show evidence of critical investigation and evaluation;*
- *demonstrate a thorough understanding of appropriate research methods; and*
- *have made an original contribution to the knowledge of the subject, field or profession through original research or the original application of existing knowledge or understanding.*

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.

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, by presenting and defending a thesis by oral defence (or approved alternative) to the satisfaction of the examiners.

The University encourages cooperation 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.

CONTENTS

1.	Principles	4
1.1	Research Degrees of the University	4
1.2	Academic Standards and Criteria for Award	5
1.3	Research Degrees Committee	6
1.4	Application of Academic Regulations to Research Students	6
2.	Admission	7
2.1	Principles of Admission	7
2.2	Admission Requirements	8
2.3	English Language Competence	9
2.4	Researcher Development	9
2.5	Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)	9
3.	Enrolment	10
4.	Supervision	10
5.	Registration for a Research Degree	11
5.1	Approval of Registration	11
5.2	Ethical Approval of Programmes of Research	13
5.3	Periods of Registration	13
5.4	Writing-Up of Thesis	14
5.5	Authorised Interruption of Studies	15
5.6	Withdrawal from Studies	15
5.7	Termination of Registration and/or Enrolment	15
6.	Monitoring and Supporting Student Progress	16
6.1	Expected Contact and Progress	16
6.2	Progress Monitoring	16
6.3	Exit with MSc by Research, MRes or MPhil	16
7.	Transfer of Registration to Doctoral Degree	17
8.	The Thesis	18
8.1	Presentation and Content	18
8.2	Publication and Confidentiality	19
9.	Research Degree Examination	20
9.1	Requisites of the Examination	20
9.2	Examination Arrangements	21
9.3	Examination Responsibilities	22
9.4	Research Student's Responsibilities for the Examination	24
9.5	Examiners' Recommendations: First Examination	25
9.6	Re-Examination	28
9.7	Examiners' Recommendations: Re-Examination	29

10. PhD by Public Output	31
10.1 Applicability	31
10.2 Application to Register for PhD by Public Output	31
10.3 Period of Registration	32
10.4 Supervision	32
10.5 The Thesis and Portfolio of Public Output	32
10.6 Examination	33
10.7 Examiners' Recommendations	34
11. Research Degrees Appeal Procedure	35
11.1 Applicability of the Research Degrees Appeal Procedure	35
11.2 Grounds of Appeal	36
11.3 Research Degrees Appeal Procedure: Submission of Appeal	36
11.4 Research Degrees Appeal Procedure: Continuing with Appeal	37
11.5 Prima Facie Case: Referral to the Student Appeals Committee	38
11.6 No Prima Facie Case: Dismissal of the Appeal	39
11.7 Research Degrees Appeal Procedure: Student Appeals Committee	39
11.8 Distribution and Retention of Records: Research Degree Appeals	41
Schedule 6.1: Assessment Criteria	42
6.1.1 Assessment Criteria: Research Degrees - Transfer of Registration from Master's to Doctorate [March 2019]	42
6.1.2 Assessment Criteria: Research Degrees – Awards of MSc by Research, MRes, MPhil and Doctorate [February 2019]	44
Schedule 6.2: Examiners' Recommendations	48
Schedule 6.3: Qualification Descriptors	50
Schedule 6.4: Sanctions – Research Misconduct (Research Degrees)	55

1. PRINCIPLES

1.1 Research Degrees of the University

- 1.1.1 Authority to confer a research degree rests with the University's Academic Council.
- 1.1.2 The University's research degrees accord with *The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland*, as contained in the *UK Quality Code for Higher Education*. Consequently, they correspond to:
- the *Qualification Descriptors*¹ (refer to **Schedule 6.3** of this Regulation), which provide points of reference that describe the main outcomes of a qualification; and
 - the *Qualification Characteristics: Doctoral Degree* and the *Qualification Characteristics: Master's Degree*², both of which describe the distinctive features of a qualification.
- 1.1.3 The University has the authority to confer the following research degrees:
- (i) Master of Science by Research (MSc by Research);
 - (ii) Master of Research (MRes);
 - (iii) Master of Philosophy (MPhil);
 - (iv) Master of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy (MPsychPsych)
 - (v) Doctor of Philosophy (PhD);
 - (vi) Doctor of Philosophy by Public Output (PhD);
 - (vii) Doctor of Business Administration (DBA);
 - (viii) Doctor of Engineering (EngD);
 - (ix) Doctor of Information Science (DInfSc);
 - (x) Doctor of Professional Practice (DPP);
 - (xi) Doctor of Physiotherapy (DPT);
 - (xii) Doctor of Child and Adolescent Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy (DPsychPsych).

¹ *The Frameworks for HE Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies (2014)*, section 4, www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/qualifications-and-credit-frameworks

² *Characteristics Statements* (2015), www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/supporting-resources

The awards listed in paragraphs 1.2.3(vii) to 1.2.3(xii) above are professional doctorates and are referred to as 'professional doctorates' thereafter in this Regulation.

1.1.4 Research degrees may also be conferred posthumously in accordance with [Regulation A4: Assessment and Recommendations of Assessment Boards, paragraph 15](#) (refer also to [paragraph 9.1.6](#) of this Regulation).

1.2 Academic Standards and Criteria for Award

1.2.1 Doctoral degrees shall be awarded to a research student who:

- (i) has made an original contribution to the knowledge of the subject, discipline or sector through original research or the original application of existing knowledge or understanding; and
- (ii) shows evidence of critical investigation and evaluation; and
- (iii) demonstrates a thorough understanding of appropriate research methods; and
- (iv) has presented a thesis to the satisfaction of the examiners; and
- (v) has defended a thesis, by oral examination (or approved alternative), to the satisfaction of the examiners.

1.2.2 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:

- (i) has presented a thesis to the satisfaction of the examiners; and
- (ii) has defended the thesis, by oral examination (or approved alternative), to the satisfaction of the examiners.

1.2.3 The University uses the following measures to maintain the academic standards of its research degree awards:

- (i) admitting applicants who meet the admission criteria (refer to [paragraph 2](#) of this Regulation); and
- (ii) regularly monitoring the academic progress of its research students (refer to [paragraph 6](#) of this Regulation); and
- (iii) appointing examiners who meet the criteria for the appointment of examiners (refer to [paragraph 9.2.5 to 9.2.9](#) of this Regulation); and

- (iv) requiring the examiners of research degree awards to use the University's *Assessment Criteria* (refer to [Schedule 6.1](#) of this Regulation) when reaching their recommendation.

1.3 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 (refer also to [Organisational Regulation O4, Schedule 4.5: Research Degrees Committee](#)).

1.4 Application of Academic Regulations to Research Students

1.4.1 Exclusions

As enrolled students of the University, research students are subject to the provisions of [Regulation A3: Student Conduct and Appeals](#), with the exception of [Section 1: Academic Appeals - Awards and Progression Procedure](#), which does not apply.

1.4.2 Research Degree Appeals

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 a specified doctoral degree, following a second unsuccessful attempt.

1.4.3 Research Misconduct

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 Philosophy by Public Output (PhD);
 - (vi) Doctor of Business Administration (DBA);
 - (vii) Doctor of Engineering (EngD);
 - (viii) Doctor of Information Science (DInfSc);
 - (ix) Doctor of Professional Practice (DPP);
 - (x) Doctor of Physiotherapy (DPT);
 - (xi) Doctor of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy (DPsychPsych).
- 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 master's 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 master's 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) and, where appropriate, in accordance with current UK legislation. The host academic School 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, and this shall be set with the prior approval of the Research Degrees Committee.

2.4 Researcher Development

- 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 Researcher Development*. In addition to serving as part of the research student's induction process, the course is intended to provide the research student with professional research skills.
- 2.4.2 Simultaneous registration for a course at the University or any other institution, other than the *Postgraduate Certificate Researcher Development*, 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 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

- 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 12 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:
- (i) *Principal Supervisor*, with formal responsibility for the research student's supervision;
 - (ii) *Second Supervisor*,
 - (iii) *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 in which the research student is based, the Principal Supervisor will assume the role of Study Coordinator.
- 4.4 A Study Coordinator will be appointed from within the host academic School in which the research student is based:
- (i) if neither the Principal Supervisor or the Second Supervisor are members of staff within the host academic School; or
 - (ii) if neither the Principal Supervisor or the Second Supervisor has supervised a research student to successful completion of a PhD or other doctoral award.
- 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 after being notified.
- 4.11 Where a member of the supervisory team leaves the University permanently, whether through retiral or taking up employment elsewhere, it may be possible to remain on the supervisory team. In such circumstances, a *Change in Approved Supervision Arrangements (RDS)* form should be completed and submitted for approval by the Research Degrees Committee.

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 normally after one month and no later than three months after their 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 where the research student is based, 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 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 dedicate, 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 and 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

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 using the *Change of Registration Status (RDR-CH)* form, that requires approval by the Research Degrees Committee.

5.3.5 A research student shall submit the thesis to the Graduate School 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 *Extension of Registration Period (RDExt)* form and will be subject to an assessment period 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.

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 shall apply for an authorised interruption of registration, using the *Authorised Interruption of Registration (RDInterrupt)* form, that is submitted for approval by the Research Degrees Committee. Normally the authorised interruption shall not total 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 Graduate School. 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 supervisory team and/or the Graduate School have 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 supervisory team shall complete a *Termination of Registration/Enrolment (RDTerm)* form, providing supporting evidence as appropriate, and submit this to the Dean of Graduate School.
- 5.7.2 The Research Degrees Committee shall consider the *Termination of Registration/Enrolment (RDTerm)* form, supporting evidence provided by the supervisory team and/or Graduate School. If 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:
- (i) confirm the Research Degrees Committee's decision and the effective date;
 - (ii) advise the research student of the right to appeal, in accordance with *Regulation A6: Research Degrees*, paragraph 10, *Research Degrees Appeal Procedure*;
 - (iii) advise of outstanding debts or over-payments or arrears of fees, scholarships, funds etc.;
 - (iv) 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, and of making satisfactory progress, as specified in the offer letter issued to the research degree applicant.

6.2 Progress Monitoring

6.2.1 Twice in each year of registration the Research Degrees Committee shall establish whether the research student is still engaged with the programme of research, can evidence satisfactory progress, and is maintaining regular and frequent contact with the supervisors.

6.2.2 The Committee shall consider the *6 and 12 Month Progress Monitoring Report (RSR)* and determine any appropriate action. Exceptionally, this may include the termination of the research student's registration in accordance with [paragraph 5.7](#) of this Regulation.

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 be reassigned to that for MSc by Research, or MRes, or MPhil. In doing so, the research student shall be required to submit a thesis and undertake an oral defence (refer also to [paragraph 9.1](#) of this Regulation) in fulfilment of the intended award and in accordance with the requirements of the Research Degrees Committee; reassignment to the MSc by Research, MRes or MPhil will be permitted only when a research student has also successfully completed the first module of the *Postgraduate Certificate Researcher Development* as determined by the Research Degrees Committee.

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 be reassigned 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 defence in fulfilment of the intended award (refer also to [paragraph 9.1](#) of this Regulation) and in accordance with the requirements of the Research Degrees Committee; reassignment to the MSc by Research or MRes will be permitted only when a research student has also successfully completed the first module of the *Postgraduate Certificate Researcher Development* as determined by the Research Degrees Committee.

7. TRANSFER OF REGISTRATION TO DOCTORAL DEGREE

- 7.1 A research student registered initially for a master's degree with the possibility of transfer to PhD or a professional doctorate shall require the approval of the Research Degrees Committee to transfer.
- 7.2 Normally, a request to transfer shall be submitted within 15 months of full-time study or approximately 24 months of part-time study.
- 7.3 A request to transfer registration from a master's to a doctoral degree involves satisfactory completion of:
- (i) a *Transfer Proposal (TP)* form, accompanied by an updated *Research Ethics: Research Student and Supervisor Assessment (RESSA)* form and evidence of successful completion of the Postgraduate Certificate Researcher Development, unless otherwise granted exemption; and
 - (ii) an oral assessment, which shall normally be held in person in the United Kingdom.
- 7.4 Before approving transfer from a master's to a doctoral degree 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 doctoral 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, MRes only, or MPhil only, and who wishes to continue study towards a doctoral degree, shall be required to submit details of the objectives of the doctoral level research and proposed plan of work for the doctoral degree to the Research Degrees Committee for approval, in addition to the *Change of Registration Status (RDR-CH)* form.
- 7.6 Where the Research Degrees Committee approves a transfer, any previous study will be subsumed within the doctoral degree awarded, and shall be regarded as non-award-bearing, unless the research student chooses to subsequently exit prematurely, as specified in [paragraph 6.3](#) 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 ratifies the assessment team's recommendation of a failed transfer attempt, the research student shall be permitted one further opportunity to submit for transfer.
- 7.8 Where the Research Degrees Committee ratifies the assessment team's recommendation of a second failed transfer attempt the supervisory team will advise the research student on the requirements to submit for an MSc by Research or MRes award. The research student shall also have the right to appeal in accordance with [paragraph 10](#) of this Regulation.

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 approved 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 guidance available from the Graduate School. Except where the Research Degrees Committee permits particular relaxation, the thesis shall accord with this guidance.
- 8.1.5 There shall be an abstract of approximately 300-500 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:
- (i) the name of the author;
 - (ii) the degree for which the thesis is submitted; and
 - (iii) the title of the thesis.
- 8.1.6 If the thesis is in printed format, the abstract shall be bound into the thesis. If the thesis is in electronic format, the abstract shall be submitted in electronic format.
- 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 defence. The period of confidentiality shall not normally exceed two years from the date of the oral defence. 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 Graduate School 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 Graduate School shall lodge an electronic copy of the thesis in the University Library and an electronic 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 \(OpenAIR\)](#) 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](#) 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. RESEARCH DEGREE EXAMINATION

9.1 Requisites of the Examination

9.1.1 The examination shall involve:

- (i) the submission and assessment of a thesis;
- (ii) the oral defence of the thesis³.

9.1.2 The oral defence 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 defence shall normally be held in person in 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 1.2.3](#) of this Regulation, unless they have successfully **completed the Postgraduate Certificate Researcher Development** (or approved alternative);
- (ii) for a master's degree, as specified in [paragraph 1.2.3](#) of this Regulation, unless they have successfully completed the first module of the **Postgraduate Certificate Researcher Development** (or approved alternative).

9.1.5 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 defence, an **alternative form of examination or assessment** 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.

³ And henceforth, or alternative method of assessment approved by the Research Degrees Committee (refer to [paragraph 9.1.5](#))

- 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 their 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 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** from outwith the School concerned, 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 defence as an observer only with the prior written consent of the research student.
- 9.1.10 In accordance with the University's *Fit to Sit Policy*, a research student who has undertaken an oral defence shall be considered to have declared themselves well enough to do so.

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 9.2.4](#) of this Regulation, a research student shall normally be examined by two examiners who shall be:
- (i) an external examiner;
 - (ii) 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 staff of the University, but with the exception of KTP researchers, 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 normally be qualified to the level at which they are being appointed to examine and be experienced in research in the general area of the research student's thesis. Where practicable, the external examiner(s) shall have specialist experience in the particular topic(s) that is 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 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 their 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 five years prior to their appointment. The Research Degrees Committee shall ensure that an external examiner is not appointed with such frequency that their familiarity with the University might be considered prejudicial to objective judgement.
- 9.2.9 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 in the same School, nor served as an external examiner on a taught course in the same School, during the preceding five years. Normally, he/she shall not have served as an external examiner for another research student from the same School in the preceding 18 months.

9.3 Examination Responsibilities

Examination Responsibilities: Examiners

- 9.3.1 Prior to any oral defence, each examiner shall read and examine the thesis and submit an independent report using the *Examiner Preliminary Report (RDExamA)* form to the Graduate School no later than seven days prior to the oral defence. In preparing such a preliminary report, each examiner shall consider whether the thesis satisfies the requirements of the degree with reference to the University's *Assessment Criteria* (refer to [Schedule 6.1](#) of this Regulation).
- 9.3.2 Examiners shall submit all reports and/or recommendations to the Research Degrees Committee on the appropriate forms and within agreed timescales.

Examination Responsibilities: Study Coordinator

- 9.3.3 It shall be the responsibility of a research student's Study Coordinator (refer to [paragraphs 4.2 and 4.3](#) of this Regulation) to organise the arrangements for the research student's examination. This shall include:
- (i) the completion and submission of appropriate forms prior to the examination;
 - (ii) providing a justification for the appropriateness of the proposed examiners, referring both to the criteria for appointment and the examiners' expertise and experience;
 - (iii) confirming the examination date and venue to the Graduate School; and
 - (iv) submitting these arrangements using the *Examination Arrangements (RDE)* form to the Research Degrees Committee at least six months prior to the examination date stated in the *Examination Arrangements (RDE)* form.
- 9.3.4 The thesis cannot be submitted until the examination team and examination arrangements have been formally approved by the Research Degrees Committee (refer also to [paragraph 8.1.1](#) of this Regulation).
- 9.3.5 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: Graduate School

- 9.3.6 The Graduate School 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.
- 9.3.7 The Graduate School 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:
- (i) one copy of the research student's thesis;
 - (ii) the *Examiner Preliminary Report (RDEExamA)* or *Examiner Preliminary Report – Re-Examination (RDEExamAR)* form;
 - (iii) and a copy of the relevant University Regulations and *Assessment Criteria*.
- 9.3.8 The Graduate School shall request that all the examiners complete the *Examiner Preliminary Report (RDEExamA)* or *Examiner Preliminary Report – Re-Examination (RDEExamAR)* forms independently and then return to the Graduate School no later than seven days prior to the oral defence.

9.3.9 Upon receiving confirmation of the preliminary arrangements from the Study Coordinator the Graduate School is responsible for notifying the research student, internal convener and the examiners of the date and venue of the oral defence.

Examination Responsibilities – Internal Convener

9.3.10 No currently enrolled and registered research student shall act as an Internal Convener.

9.3.11 On the day of the oral defence, the Internal Convener will have the following responsibilities:

- (i) to manage the operation of the oral defence meeting;
- (ii) to ensure compliance with University Regulations, policies and procedures, including relevant passport checks;
- (iii) to ensure the *Examiner Final Report (RDEExamB)* or *Examiner Final Report – Re-Examination (RDEExamBR)* form, as appropriate, is completed;
- (iv) to facilitate discussion where consensus is desirable, but not to arbitrate in any respect;
- (v) to collect all of the examiners' copies of the thesis, unless otherwise retained by the examiners or passed to the research student, and recording this on the *Examiner Final Report (RDEExamB)* or *Examiner Final Report – Re-Examination (RDEExamBR)* form, as appropriate.

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 direct formal contact with the examiners before or after the oral defence until the examination process is concluded;

- (v) complete the *Research Student's Self-Declaration (RDDecl)* form in which he/she shall confirm both that the content of the thesis has not been submitted for a comparable academic award and the word count. The *Research Student's Self-Declaration (RDDecl)* form shall be accompanied by a Turnitin Originality Score and Originality Report. 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 University's guidance. 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 Examiners' Recommendations: First Examination

9.5.1 At the conclusion of the examination and **where the examiners are in agreement**, and with reference to the University's *Assessment Criteria* (refer to [Schedule 6.1](#) of this Regulation) they shall make one of the following recommendations to the Research Degrees Committee:

(i) **Award**

The research student be awarded the degree, following a successful oral defence and the submission of a thesis requiring either:

- (a) no amendment; or
- (b) minor presentational amendments only, which shall be made within one month regardless of study mode.

(ii) **Award with Amendments**

Following a successful oral defence, the research student be awarded the degree subject to amendments being made to the thesis to the satisfaction of:

- (a) the internal examiner; or
- (b) the external examiner(s); or
- (c) both/all examiners.

The research student shall receive the examiners' written guidance, describing the deficiencies of the thesis and the reasons for their recommendation.

The research student shall complete the amendments within 3 months (full-time study mode) or 6 months (part-time study mode) of receiving the examiners' written guidance from the Graduate School.

(iii) **Fail and re-submit for intended award** (thesis failed only)

Following a successful oral defence and the submission of an unsatisfactory thesis, the research student be permitted to re-submit the thesis to the satisfaction of:

- (a) the internal examiner; or
- (b) the external examiner(s); or
- (c) both/all examiners.

The research student shall receive the examiners' written guidance describing:

- (a) the deficiencies of the thesis, and the reasons for their recommendation; and
- (b) the amendments required to meet the standard for the award.

The research student shall complete the corrections to the thesis and submit for re-examination within 12 months (full-time study mode) or 24 months (part-time study mode) of receiving the examiners' written guidance from the Graduate School.

(iv) **Fail and re-submit for intended award** (oral defence failed only)

Following an unsuccessful oral defence and the submission of a satisfactory thesis, the research student be permitted to undertake a further oral defence and re-submit the thesis with any suggested minor presentational amendments.

The research student shall receive the examiners' written guidance, describing the deficiencies of the oral defence, the reasons for their recommendation, and any minor presentational amendments required to the thesis.

The research student shall complete the minor presentational amendments to the thesis and submit for re-examination within 3 months (full-time study mode) or 6 months (part-time study mode) of receiving the examiners' written guidance from the Graduate School.

(v) **Fail and re-submit for intended award** (both components failed)

Following an unsuccessful oral defence and the submission of an unsatisfactory thesis, the research student be permitted to re-submit the thesis and undertake a further oral defence.

The research student shall receive the examiners' written guidance, describing:

- (a) the deficiencies of the thesis and the oral defence, and the reasons for their recommendation; and
- (b) the amendments required to meet the standard for the award.

The research student shall complete the corrections to the thesis and submit for re-examination within 12 months (full-time study mode) or 24 months (part-time study mode) of receiving the examiners' written guidance from the Graduate School.

(vi) **Fail and re-submit for lower exit award** (for students submitting for PhD only)

Following an unsuccessful oral defence and/or the submission of an unsatisfactory doctoral thesis, the research student be permitted to re-submit the thesis and undertake a further oral defence for the lower exit award of:

- (a) MPhil; or
- (b) MRes; or
- (c) MSc by Research; or
- (d) an appropriate exit award as defined in the respective professional doctorate Course Specification.

The research student shall receive the examiners' written guidance describing:

- (a) the deficiencies of the thesis and/or the oral defence and the reasons for their recommendation; and
- (b) the amendments required to meet the standard for the lower award.

The research student shall complete the amendments to the thesis and submit for re-examination within 12 months (full-time study mode) or 24 months (part-time study mode) of receiving the examiners' written guidance from the Graduate School.

9.5.2 At the conclusion of the oral defence and where the **examiners are in agreement**, the Internal Convener shall coordinate the completion of the *Examiner Final Report (RDEExamB)* form and its submission to the Graduate School, stating their recommendation in accordance with [paragraph 9.5.1](#) 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.

9.5.3 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.

9.5.4 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 Graduate School. 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.

9.5.5 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

defence. 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 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 taking account of the research student's mode of study. 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 Graduate School.

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

9.6.3 The re-examination shall have one or two components:

- (i) the re-submission of the revised thesis; and/or
- (ii) the oral defence of the existing/revised thesis, as appropriate.

9.6.4 Each examiner shall read and examine the thesis and independently submit the *Examiner Preliminary Report – Re-Examination (RDEExamAR)* form to the Graduate School no later than seven days prior to the oral defence. Such reports shall state whether the thesis satisfies the requirements of the degree.

9.7 Examiners' Recommendations: Re-Examination

9.7.1 At the conclusion of the re-examination and **where the examiners are in agreement**, and with reference to the University's *Assessment Criteria* (refer to [Schedule 6.1](#) of this Regulation), they shall make one of the following recommendations to the Research Degrees Committee:

(i) **Award**

The research student be awarded the degree, following a successful oral defence and the submission of a thesis requiring either:

- (a) no amendment; or
- (b) minor presentational amendments only, which shall be made within one month regardless of study mode.

(ii) **Award with Amendments**

Following a successful oral defence, the research student be awarded the degree subject to amendments being made to the thesis to the satisfaction of:

- (a) the internal examiner; or
- (b) the external examiner(s); or
- (c) both/all examiners.

The research student shall receive the examiners' written guidance, describing the deficiencies of the thesis and the reasons for their recommendation.

The research student shall complete the amendments within 3 months (full-time study mode) or 6 months (part-time study mode) of receiving the examiners' written guidance from the Graduate School.

(iii) **Fail and submit for lower exit award** (for students re-submitting for PhD only)

Following an unsuccessful oral defence and/or the submission of an unsatisfactory doctoral thesis, the research student be permitted to re-submit the thesis for the lower exit award of:

- (a) MPhil; or
- (b) MRes; or
- (c) MSc by Research; or
- (d) an appropriate exit award as defined in the respective professional doctorate Course Specification.

The re-submitted thesis will require to be amended to the satisfaction of:

- (a) the internal examiner; or
- (b) the external examiner(s); or
- (c) both/all examiners.

The research student shall receive the examiners' written guidance describing:

- (a) the deficiencies of the thesis and/or the oral defence, and the reasons for their recommendation; and
- (b) the amendments required to meet the standard for the lower award.

The research student shall complete the amendments and submit for re-examination within 3 months (full-time study mode) or 6 months (part-time study mode) of receiving the examiners' written guidance from the Graduate School.

(iv) **Fail**

Following an unsuccessful oral defence and/or the submission of an unsatisfactory thesis, no degree be awarded and no re-examination be permitted.

The examiners shall prepare an agreed written statement of the deficiencies of the thesis and/or the oral defence, and the reasons for their recommendation, for issue to the research student by the Graduate School.

9.7.2 On completion of the re-examination procedure the Internal Convener shall coordinate the completion of the *Examiner Final Report – Re-Examination (RDEExamBR)* form and its submission to the Graduate School, stating their recommendation in accordance with [paragraph 9.7.1](#) 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.

9.7.3 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.

9.7.4 Where an additional external examiner is appointed in accordance with the provisions of [paragraph 9.6.2](#) 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 defence. 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](#) of this Regulation.

10. PHD BY PUBLIC OUTPUT

10.1 Applicability

10.1.1 Any member of academic staff of the University, including affiliate or honorary appointees, or staff from an affiliated institution, shall be eligible to apply to register for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by Public Output (PhD) in accordance with [paragraph 1.1.3\(iv\)](#) of this Regulation, undertaken in part-time mode of study, and subject to the provisions of this Regulation, except as specified in the following paragraphs.

10.1.2 For the purposes of this Regulation, an affiliated institution is an organisation with which the University has engaged in research collaboration.

10.1.3 The award of PhD by Public Output can be achieved by either a fully retrospective portfolio, a fully prospective portfolio, or from a portfolio comprising a combination of both retrospective and prospective outputs.

10.2 Application to Register for PhD by Public Output

10.2.1 The applicant shall submit an application to register for the degree of PhD by Public Output to the Research Degrees Committee.

10.2.2 The application shall be made using the appropriate form that will:

- (i) provide an outline discussion (approximately 1,500 words) of the original contribution the public outputs make to the knowledge of the field or profession through original research or the original application of existing knowledge or understanding;
- (ii) make explicit the claim upon which the candidature will be based, confirming the portfolio will set out a case of coherent research enquiry consistent with a single research question or hypothesis;
- (iii) indicate the nature and intended number of peer-reviewed public outputs of an appropriate high quality and standard on which the candidature is to be based as appropriate to the field or profession. Typically, this would comprise between 3 and 7 items, influenced by journal impact factor for example, that collectively meet the assessment criteria detailed in [Schedule 6.1](#). Any item of public output co-produced/co-authored with a current or past research student from any institution will not be eligible for inclusion in the portfolio;
- (iv) for a retrospective or combined retrospective/prospective portfolio, specify the existing public output(s) on which the candidature is to be based, where outputs produced more than 5 years before the submission date cannot constitute a majority;

- (v) for existing public output(s) produced in conjunction with co-author(s) or collaborator(s) (or equivalent), provide for each output a statement specifying what proportion of the work was carried out personally by the applicant. This must be authenticated by all co-authors or collaborators to verify the claim, whilst also giving their explicit approval for inclusion. For prospective output(s), equivalent co-author approval would be required before the thesis/portfolio would be eligible for submission.

10.3 Period of Registration

The minimum period of registration will be 1 year with the maximum period being 6 years.

10.4 Supervision

As set out in section 4 of this Regulation, the Research Degrees Committee shall approve the appointment 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. One supervisor shall be appointed Principal Supervisor and Study Coordinator with formal responsibility for the public output candidate's supervision. All arrangements for supervision will be subject to the provisions of this Regulation.

10.5 The Thesis and Portfolio of Public Output

After a minimum period of registration of 1 year, the public output candidate will be eligible to submit a thesis and accompanying portfolio of public output for examination, subject to provisions of this Regulation, except as prescribed below.

(i) The Thesis

This will be a supporting written document explaining the underlying aim, objectives, and coherence of the portfolio submission for award of PhD, and which shall be capable of being published in its own right. The text shall normally be approximately 10,000 words (excluding appendices) and include the following:

- (a) an abstract of approximately 300-500 words providing a synopsis of the content of the thesis/portfolio;
- (b) an overview of current pertinent literature relevant to the field or profession that sets the achievement of the portfolio in context in respect to the original contribution being claimed;
- (c) a list of the public outputs submitted within the portfolio on which the claim for original contribution is based;

- (d) a demonstration and discussion of the original contribution to knowledge, or the original application of existing knowledge or understanding, made by the public outputs to the general advancement of the field or profession, and where a common theme for all outputs must be evidenced;
- (e) an appendix containing, for each public output item produced in conjunction with co-author(s) or collaborator(s) (or equivalent), a statement specifying what tasks and proportions of the work were carried out personally by the public output candidate, and evidence of approval by all co-authors or collaborators to verify such claim.

(ii) **Portfolio of Public Output**

The portfolio shall consist of the public outputs listed in [paragraph 10.5.1\(i\)\(c\)](#) of this Regulation and achieve the following, where:

- (a) 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 or hypothesis;
- (b) every item of public output included in the portfolio shall have been subject to peer review, with documentary evidence of this review included for each item. Where the portfolio consists of outputs that are not amenable to traditional peer review, the Research Degrees Committee will, in lieu, arrange for those items of output in the portfolio to be scrutinised by an external independent expert(s) in the given field or profession;
- (c) exceptionally, another item can be appended, where the public output candidate can opt to include a related output that clearly evidences support for the original contribution of the research presented within the portfolio.

10.6 Examination

10.6.1 Examination of the public output candidate will be subject to the provisions of this Regulation, except as prescribed below.

10.6.2 In accordance with [paragraph 9.1.1](#), the examination for the award of PhD by Public Output shall involve:

- (i) the submission and assessment of a thesis and accompanying portfolio; and
- (ii) the oral defence of the submission.

10.6.3 A candidate for the award of PhD by Public Output shall be examined by three examiners approved by the Research Degrees Committee:

- (i) two external examiners;
- (ii) an internal examiner, a member of University staff not associated with the public output candidate or supervisory team.

10.6.4 In examining the public output candidate with reference to the University's *Assessment Criteria* (refer to [Schedule 6.1](#) of this Regulation), the examiners must determine whether an original contribution to the knowledge of the field or profession has been made through original research or the original application of existing knowledge or understanding; and

- (i) the public outputs submitted demonstrate that the candidate has personally carried out a systematic programme of study and research at least comparable with that required to prepare a PhD thesis in the field or profession concerned; and
- (ii) has shown evidence of critical investigation and evaluation; and
- (iii) has demonstrated a thorough understanding of appropriate research methodologies; and
- (iv) has presented a thesis and portfolio to the satisfaction of the examiners; and
- (v) has defended their thesis and portfolio by oral examination to the satisfaction of the examiners.

10.7 Examiners' Recommendations

10.7.1 At the conclusion of the examination, and **where the examiners are in agreement** and with reference to the University's *Assessment Criteria* (refer to [Schedule 6.1](#) of this Regulation), they shall make one of the following recommendations to the Research Degrees Committee:

(i) **Award**

The public output candidate be awarded the degree, following a successful oral defence and the submission of a thesis and portfolio requiring either:

- (a) no amendment; or
- (b) minor presentational amendments only, which shall be made within one month.

(ii) **Award with Amendments**

Following a successful oral defence, the public output candidate be awarded the degree subject to amendments being made to the thesis to the satisfaction of:

- (a) the internal examiner; or

- (b) the external examiner(s); or
- (c) both/all examiners.

The public output candidate shall receive the examiners' written guidance, describing the deficiencies of the thesis and the reasons for their recommendation.

The public output candidate shall complete the amendments within 6 months of receiving the examiners' written guidance from the Graduate School.

(iii) **Fail**

Following an unsuccessful oral defence and/or the submission of an unsatisfactory thesis and/or portfolio, no degree be awarded and no re-examination be permitted.

The examiners shall prepare an agreed written statement of the deficiencies of the thesis and/or portfolio, and/or the oral defence, and the reasons for their recommendation, for issue to the public output candidate by the Graduate School.

10.7.2 In the event of disagreement between the examiners, the normal procedures, according to [paragraph 9.5.4](#) of this Regulation, shall apply.

10.7.3 Following the award of the degree, the Graduate School shall lodge one electronic copy of the thesis and, where appropriate, portfolio of public output in the University Library.

10.7.4 A re-application for the award of PhD by Public Output can be made by a candidate normally after a period of 5 years following the previous examination, although where suitable justification exists, the Research Degrees Committee may consider an earlier re- application. Only one re-application by the candidate is permissible.

10.7.5 All other issues, concerning such matters as appeals, shall be as specified by this Regulation.

11. RESEARCH DEGREES APPEAL PROCEDURE

11.1 Applicability of the Research Degrees Appeal Procedure

The Research Degree Appeal 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 a specified doctoral degree following a second unsuccessful attempt.

11.2 Grounds of Appeal

- 11.2.1 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.
- 11.2.2 In accordance with the University's *Fit to Sit Policy*, a research student who has undertaken an oral defence shall be considered to have declared themselves well enough to do so.
- 11.2.3 Disagreement with the academic judgement of the examiners or the Research Degrees Committee cannot constitute grounds for appeal.
- 11.2.4 A research student shall not be permitted to lodge more than one appeal against a recommendation of the examiners or the Research Degrees Committee.

Grounds for Appeal

- 11.2.5 Appeals shall be considered only on the following grounds for appeal:
 - (i) that there is exceptional and compelling justification, which can be evidenced, that the student was experiencing such physical or mental incapacity as to prevent the student from:
 - (a) notifying the Graduate School in advance of the oral defence;and/or
 - (b) undertaking the oral defence;
 - (ii) that there had been a material procedural, administrative or computational error;
 - (iii) that the examination was not conducted in accordance with the current Research Degree Regulations.
- 11.2.6 If a research student makes any alteration to the grounds of their appeal at any time after its initial lodgement with the School, then the appeal shall be deemed invalid.

11.3 Research Degrees Appeal Procedure: Submission of Appeal

- 11.3.1 The research student 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 10.2.5](#).

- 11.3.2 The research student shall submit 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 20 working days⁴ after receipt of the decision. It shall be the research student's responsibility to ensure full and accurate contact details are provided on the *Student Appeal form: Research Degree*. All communications to a student confirming decisions/outcomes shall be sent by first class mail and email. All other communications shall be sent by email only.
- 11.3.3 Where the *Student Appeal form: Research Degree* is lodged later than 12 months following receipt of the decision then it shall not be considered and the Dean of Graduate School shall communicate this to the student by email, normally within 10 days of the lodgement of the appeal. There shall be no further right of appeal.

11.4 Research Degrees Appeal Procedure: Continuing with Appeal

Validity of an Appeal for Consideration

- 11.4.1 An appeal shall be deemed valid for consideration by the Deputy Academic Registrar only if the *Student Appeal form: Research Degree* is submitted within 20 working days of receipt of the decision the research student is appealing. Any appeal not meeting this requirement will not be considered, and will be dismissed. The student shall have no further right of appeal. The Deputy Academic Registrar shall notify the student accordingly.
- 11.4.2 Where an appeal is deemed to be valid for consideration then the Deputy Academic Registrar shall determine whether a prima facie case for an appeal exists.

Prima Facie Basis for Appeal

- 11.4.3 A prima facie basis for an appeal shall be deemed to exist only where there is relevant evidence provided by the student which:
- (i) relates to the specified grounds for appeal as described in [paragraph 10.2.5](#) of this Regulation; and demonstrates:
 - (a) the student was prevented from notifying the Graduate School of a physical or mental incapacity in advance of the oral defence; and/or
 - (b) a mental or physical incapacity prevented the student from undertaking the oral defence; and/or

⁴ And henceforth, "working days" are Monday to Friday and excludes days that the University is closed.

- (c) a material procedural, administrative or computational error has occurred; and/or
- (d) the assessment was not conducted in accordance with the current Research Degree Regulations.

Decisions

11.4.4 The Deputy Academic Registrar shall have the following decisions available to them:

- (i) **Prima facie case:** where it is deemed a prima facie case exists the Deputy Academic Registrar shall have the following two options available to them:
 - (a) refer a case directly back to the Research Degrees Committee for re-consideration, once only, when:
 - additional relevant evidence is submitted that was not previously made available to the Research Degrees Committee; and/or
 - it is deemed by Deputy Academic Registrar that there is insufficient evidence of appropriate consideration of a case by the Research Degrees Committee; and/or
 - it is deemed by the Deputy Academic Registrar that the Research Degrees Committee's decision was unreasonable on the basis of the information available to it when reaching its decision.
 - (b) refer a case to the *Student Appeals Committee* for consideration in accordance with the provisions of [paragraph 10.5](#) of this Procedure.
- (ii) **No prima facie case:** where it is deemed by the Deputy Academic Registrar, acting with delegated authority on behalf of the Principal, that no prima facie case exists, they shall confirm the case be dismissed in accordance with the provisions of [paragraph 10.6](#) of this Procedure.

11.5 Prima Facie Case: Referral to the Student Appeals Committee

11.5.1 Where it is deemed that a prima facie case exists, the *Student Appeals Committee* shall be convened in accordance with [paragraph 11.7](#) of this Procedure.

11.5.2 The Deputy Academic Registrar shall communicate the decision to the student in writing, together with details of the procedure to be adopted by the *Student Appeals Committee*, normally within 10 working days of receipt of the *Student Appeal Form: Research Degree*.

11.6 No Prima Facie Case: Dismissal of the Appeal

11.6.1 Where it is deemed by the Deputy Academic Registrar, acting with delegated authority on behalf of the Principal, that no *prima facie* case exists, the appeal shall be dismissed. There shall be no appeal against such a decision of the Deputy Academic Registrar.

11.6.2 The Deputy Academic Registrar shall communicate the decision to dismiss to the research student in writing within 10 working days of receiving the *Student Appeal form: Research Degrees*; the Deputy Academic Registrar, or nominee, shall also communicate the decision to dismiss to the Dean of School and the Dean of Graduate School.

11.7 Research Degrees Appeal Procedure: Student Appeals Committee

11.7.1 A meeting of the *Student Appeals Committee* shall be convened normally within 20 working days of the research student being notified that a *prima facie* case is established. The Secretary of the *Student Appeals Committee* shall confirm in writing to the research student the date, time and venue for the Committee at least 10 working days prior to the meeting, issuing the correspondence by recorded delivery, first class mail and email. The student shall be notified that if he/she fails to attend, without good reason, the meeting may proceed in their absence, without this constituting grounds for appeal.

11.7.2 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. This evidence, together with the *Student Appeal form: Research Degree* and accompanying evidence, will be distributed to the research student, members of the Student Appeals Committee and the academic members of staff attending within five working days of the meeting.

11.7.3 If the research student 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 student informed that the meeting will proceed in their absence, if necessary, without this constituting grounds for appeal. If the student fails to attend without providing a good reason for non-attendance, then the meeting will proceed in their absence, without this constituting grounds for appeal.

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

- (i) the research student shall be required to appear before the Committee;
- (ii) the research student shall be entitled to be accompanied by two persons;

- (iii) the research student and those accompanying them shall be entitled to address the Committee;
- (iv) the research student 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;
- (vi) the academic members of staff shall be entitled to call witnesses.

11.7.5 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.

11.7.6 The Convener of the *Student Appeals Committee* shall issue a written notification of the outcome to the research student 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](#).

11.8 Distribution and Retention of Records: Research Degree Appeals

11.8.1 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 Graduate School's student file.
- (ii) The Secretary of the *Student Appeals Committee* shall distribute a copy of the Committee's report to:
 - the Dean of School and Dean of Graduate School, for retention in the School's student file;
 - the Deputy Academic Registrar for retention in the central appeals file.
- (iii) The Secretary 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.

11.8.2 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.

11.8.3 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.

SCHEDULE 6.1: ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

6.1.1 Assessment Criteria: Research Degrees - Transfer of Registration from Master's to Doctorate [March 2019]

The following criteria should be evident in the Transfer Proposal and/or during the oral assessment. The specified assessment domains/characteristics should be regarded as indicative and may be contextualised for specific disciplines.

Assessment Domains/Characteristics				
Knowledge and Understanding	Practice: Applied Knowledge, Skills and Understanding	Generic Cognitive Skills	Communication, ICT, and Numeracy Skills	Autonomy, Accountability, and Working with Others
<p>Use knowledge, understanding and insight generated through personal research and provide evidence of how a significant contribution to the development of the subject/discipline/sector will be made.</p> <p>Critically discuss key theories, concepts and principles in the subject/discipline/sector.</p> <p>Demonstrate critical understanding of a range of specialised theories, concepts and principles.</p> <p>Demonstrate extensive, detailed and critical</p>	<p>Plan the doctoral phase of the research using appropriate methodology/instruments of enquiry.</p> <p>Deploy a significant range of generic and specialised professional skills, techniques, practices and/or materials associated with the subject/discipline/sector at the forefront of, or informed by forefront developments.</p> <p>Apply appropriate research instruments and techniques of enquiry.</p> <p>Demonstrate creativity in the application of knowledge,</p>	<p>Deal with complex and/or new issues and make informed judgements in the absence of complete or consistent data/information.</p> <p>Apply critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis to forefront issues within the subject/discipline/sector.</p> <p>Identify conceptualise and define new problems and issues.</p> <p>Develop creative responses to problems and issues.</p> <p>Critically review, consolidate and extend knowledge, skills,</p>	<p>Use an array of routine, advanced and specialised communication, computing, visualisation, and/or numeracy skills as appropriate to the subject/discipline/sector.</p> <p>Reference work in a consistent manner in accordance with academic integrity and in compliance with a standard referencing system for the subject/discipline/sector.</p> <p>Use a wide range of ICT applications to support and enhance work at this level.</p>	<p>Manage complex ethical and professional issues and make informed judgements on new or emergent issues not addressed adequately by current professional and/or ethical codes or practices.</p> <p>Demonstrate autonomy and initiative in research and/or professional activities.</p> <p>Take responsibility for own work and for a range of resources.</p> <p>Demonstrate initiative in solving problems and/or new thinking.</p>

<p>knowledge/awareness of current issues in one or more specialisms, informed by developments at the forefront.</p>	<p>understanding and/or practice. Practice in a wide and often unpredictable variety of professional level contexts.</p>	<p>practices and thinking in a subject/discipline/sector.</p>	<p>Undertake critical evaluation of a wide range of data appropriate to the subject/discipline/sector.</p>	<p>Practice in ways which draw on critical reflection on own and other's roles and responsibilities.</p>
---	---	---	--	--

Adapted from *Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) Level Descriptors 11 and 12* (2012) [[Support for CRB Staff | Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework \(scqf.org.uk\)](#), accessed 25.07.22].

6.1.2 Assessment Criteria: Research Degrees – Awards of MSc by Research, MRes, MPhil and Doctorate [February 2019]

The following criteria should be evident in the written thesis, and/or during the oral defence of the thesis. The specified assessment domains/characteristics should be regarded as indicative and may be contextualised for specific disciplines.

Assessment Domains/ Characteristics	MSc / MRes	MPhil	Doctorate
Knowledge and Understanding	<p>Integrate knowledge and understanding from the main areas of the subject/discipline/sector to a particular situation including their features, boundaries, terminology and conventions.</p> <p>Critically discuss key theories, concepts and principles in the subject/discipline/sector.</p> <p>Demonstrate critical understanding of a range of specialised theories, concepts and principles.</p> <p>Demonstrate extensive, detailed and critical knowledge/awareness of current issues in one or more specialisms, informed by developments at the forefront.</p>	<p>Integrate knowledge and understanding from the main areas of the subject/discipline/sector to a particular situation including their features, boundaries, terminology and conventions.</p> <p>Critically discuss key theories, concepts and principles in the subject/discipline/sector.</p> <p>Demonstrate critical understanding of a range of specialised theories, concepts and principles.</p> <p>Demonstrate extensive, detailed and critical knowledge/awareness of current issues in one or more specialisms, informed by developments at the forefront.</p>	<p>Demonstrate critical overview of a subject/discipline/sector including academic insight and understanding of specialised theories, concepts and principles.</p> <p>Demonstrate critical, detailed and often leading knowledge and understanding at the forefront of the subject/discipline/ sector.</p> <p>Use knowledge, understanding and insight generated through personal research and make a significant contribution to the development of the subject/discipline/ sector.</p>
Practice: Applied Knowledge, Skills and Understanding	<p>Deploy a significant range of generic and specialised professional skills, techniques, practices and/or materials associated with the subject/discipline/sector at the forefront of, or informed by forefront developments.</p> <p>Apply appropriate research instruments and techniques of enquiry.</p>	<p>Deploy a significant range of generic and specialised professional skills, techniques, practices and/or materials associated with the subject/discipline/sector at the forefront of, or informed by forefront developments.</p> <p>Apply appropriate research instruments and techniques of enquiry.</p>	<p>Deploy a significant range of generic and specialised professional skills, techniques, practices and/or materials at the forefront of the subject/discipline/sector and enhance these where appropriate.</p> <p>Apply appropriate research instruments and techniques of enquiry.</p>

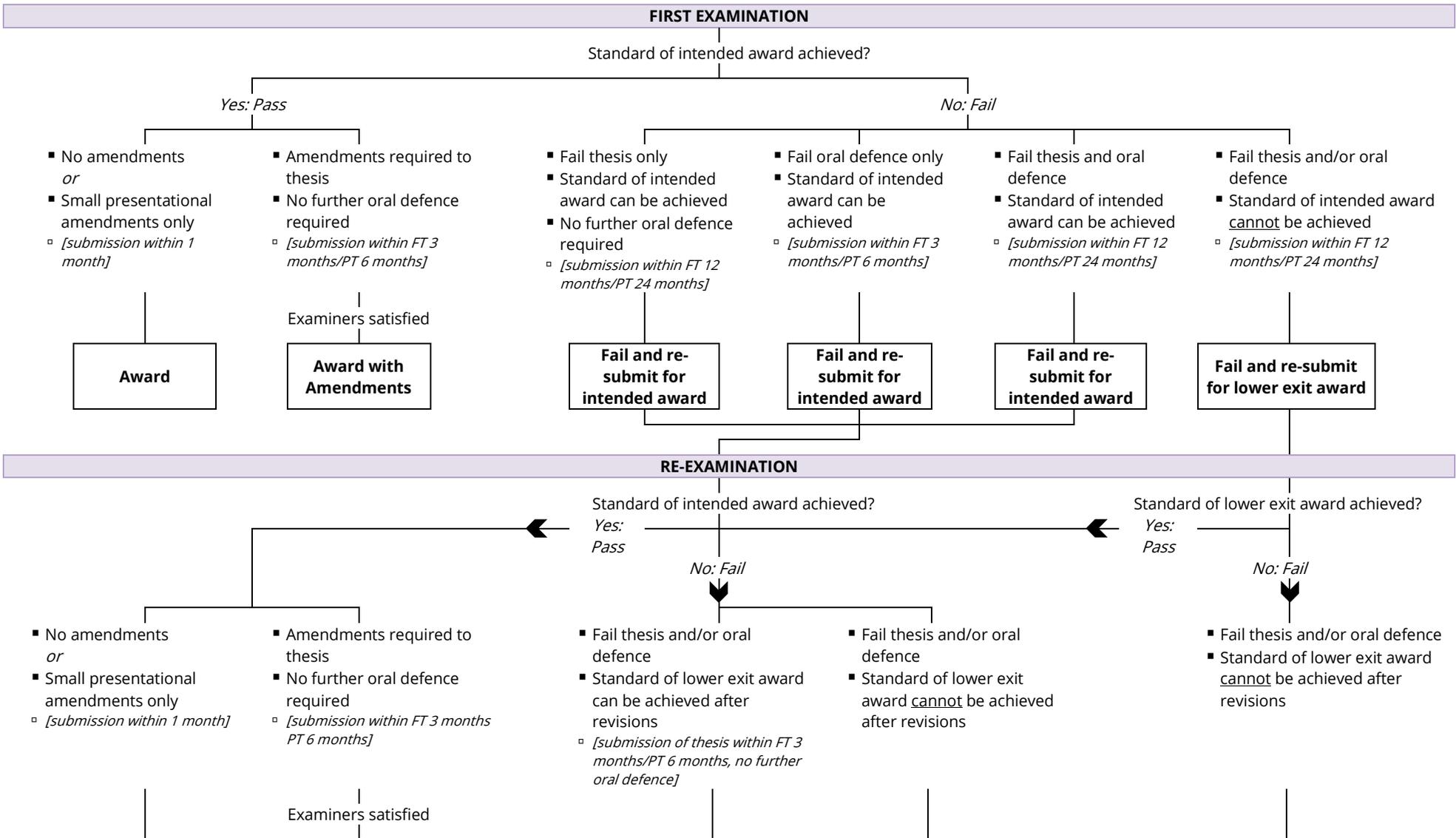
Assessment Domains/ Characteristics	MSc / MRes	MPhil	Doctorate
	<p>Plan and execute a significant research investigation or development.</p> <p>Demonstrate creativity in the application of knowledge, understanding and/or practice.</p> <p>Practice in a wide and often unpredictable variety of professional level contexts.</p>	<p>Plan and execute a significant research investigation or development.</p> <p>Demonstrate some originality and creativity in the application of knowledge understanding and/or practice.</p> <p>Practice in a wide and often unpredictable variety of professional level contexts.</p>	<p>Design and execute research of an investigative or developmental nature in order to deal with new problems and issues.</p> <p>Demonstrate originality and creativity in the development and application of new knowledge, understanding and practices.</p> <p>Practice to address new problems in novel ways and/or in novel circumstances.</p>
Generic Cognitive Skills	<p>Apply critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis to forefront issues within the subject/discipline/sector.</p> <p>Identify conceptualise and define new problems and issues.</p> <p>Develop creative responses to problems and issues.</p> <p>Critically review, consolidate and extend knowledge, skills, practices and thinking in a subject/discipline/sector.</p> <p>Deal with complex issues and make informed judgements in the absence of complete or consistent data/ information.</p>	<p>Apply critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis to forefront issues within the subject/discipline/sector.</p> <p>Identify conceptualise and define new problems and issues.</p> <p>Develop original and creative responses to problems and issues.</p> <p>Critically review, consolidate and extend knowledge, skills, practices and thinking in a subject/discipline/sector.</p> <p>Deal with complex issues and make informed judgements in the absence of complete or consistent data/ information.</p>	<p>Apply an integrated approach to critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas, information and issues.</p> <p>Identify, conceptualise and offer novel and creative insights into new, complex ideas and issues.</p> <p>Develop original and creative responses to problems and issues.</p> <p>Deal with complex and/or new issues and make informed judgements in the absence of complete or consistent data/ information.</p>
Communication, ICT and Numeracy Skills	<p>Use an array of routine, advanced and specialised communication, computing, visualisation, and/or numeracy skills as appropriate to the subject/discipline/sector.</p>	<p>Use of an array of routine advanced and specialised communication, computing, visualisation and/or numeracy skills as appropriate to the subject/discipline/sector.</p>	<p>Deploy and adapt appropriately an array of routine, advanced and specialised communication, computing, visualisation and/or numeracy skills appropriate to the subject/discipline/sector.</p>

Assessment Domains/ Characteristics	MSc / MRes	MPhil	Doctorate
	<p>Structure and present the thesis to a standard acceptable to national repositories.</p> <p>Reference work in a consistent manner in accordance with academic integrity and in compliance with a standard referencing system for the subject/discipline/sector.</p> <p>Communicate with lay people, peers, senior colleagues and specialists using appropriate methods.</p> <p>Use a wide range of ICT applications to support and enhance work at this level.</p> <p>Undertake critical evaluation of a wide range of data appropriate to the subject/discipline/sector.</p>	<p>Structure and present the thesis to a standard acceptable to national repositories.</p> <p>Reference work in a consistent manner in accordance with academic integrity and in compliance with a standard referencing system for the subject/discipline/sector.</p> <p>Communicate with lay people, peers, senior colleagues and specialists using appropriate methods.</p> <p>Use a wide range of ICT applications to support and enhance work at this level.</p> <p>Undertake critical evaluation of a wide range of data appropriate to the subject/discipline/sector.</p>	<p>Structure and present the thesis to a standard of published academic work and/or critical dialogue acceptable to national repositories.</p> <p>Reference work in a consistent manner in accordance with academic integrity and in compliance with a standard referencing system for the subject/discipline/sector.</p> <p>Communicate to a range of audiences and adapt communications to the context and purpose.</p> <p>Use a wide range of ICT applications to support and enhance work at this level.</p> <p>Undertake critical evaluation of a wide range of data appropriate to the subject/discipline/sector.</p>
<p>Autonomy, Accountability, and Working with Others</p>	<p>Demonstrate autonomy and initiative in research and/or professional activities.</p> <p>Take responsibility for own work and for a range of resources.</p> <p>Demonstrate initiative in solving problems and/or new thinking.</p>	<p>Demonstrate substantial autonomy and initiative in research and/or professional activities.</p> <p>Take significant responsibility for own work and/or responsibility for the work of others and for a range of resources.</p> <p>Demonstrate leadership and/or initiative in solving problems and/or new thinking, and make an identifiable contribution.</p>	<p>Demonstrate substantial authority and exercise a high level of autonomy and initiative in research and/or professional activities.</p> <p>Take full responsibility for own work and/or a significant proportion of the work of others, and significant responsibility for a range of resources.</p> <p>Demonstrate leadership and originality in tackling and solving problems.</p>

Assessment Domains/ Characteristics	MSc / MRes	MPhil	Doctorate
	<p>Practice in ways which draw on critical reflection on own and other’s roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>Manage complex ethical and professional issues and make informed judgements.</p>	<p>Practice in ways which draw on critical reflection on own and other’s roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>Manage complex ethical and professional issues and make informed judgements.</p>	<p>Practice in ways which are reflective, self-critical and based on research/evidence.</p> <p>Manage complex ethical and professional issues and make informed judgements on new or emergent issues not addressed adequately by current professional and/or ethical codes or practices.</p>

Adapted from *Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) Level Descriptors 11 and 12* (2012) [[Support for CRB Staff | Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework \(scqf.org.uk\)](#), accessed 25.07.22].

SCHEDULE 6.2: EXAMINERS' RECOMMENDATIONS





SCHEDULE 6.3: QUALIFICATION DESCRIPTORS

Master's Degree Descriptor

Master's Degree Descriptor for a higher education qualification at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 11 on *The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland (FQHEIS)* and level 7 on *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of Degree-Awarding Bodies in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)*⁵. The descriptor provided for this level of the frameworks is for any master's degree which should meet the descriptor in full. This qualification descriptor should also be used as a reference point for other level 11/level 7 qualifications.

Master's degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

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

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences
- demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level
- continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level.

And holders will have:

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:
 - the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility
 - decision-making in complex and unpredictable situations
 - the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.

⁵ *The Frameworks for HE Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies (2014)*, [Qualifications Frameworks \(qaa.ac.uk\)](http://Qualifications Frameworks (qaa.ac.uk)), accessed 25.07.22

Guidance:

- Much of the study undertaken for master's degrees is at, or informed by, the forefront of an academic or professional discipline. Successful students show originality in the application of knowledge, and they understand how the boundaries of knowledge are advanced through research. They are able to deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, and they show originality in tackling and solving problems. They have the qualities needed for employment in circumstances requiring sound judgement, personal responsibility and initiative in complex and unpredictable professional environments.
- Master's degrees are awarded after completion of taught courses, programmes of research or a mixture of both. Longer, research-based programmes may lead to the degree of MPhil. The learning outcomes of most master's degree courses are achieved on the basis of study equivalent to at least one full-time calendar year and are taken by graduates with a bachelor's degree with honours (or equivalent achievement).
- Master's degrees are often distinguished from other qualifications at this framework level (for example, advanced short courses, which often form parts of continuing professional development programmes and lead to postgraduate certificates and/or postgraduate diplomas) by an increased intensity, complexity and density of study. Master's degrees, in comparison to postgraduate certificates and postgraduate diplomas, typically include planned intellectual progression that often includes a synoptic/research or scholarly activity.
- Some master's degrees, for example, in science, engineering and mathematics, comprise an integrated programme of study spanning several levels. Such programmes typically involve study equivalent to at least four full-time academic years in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and five in Scotland. Of this, study equivalent to at least one full-time academic year is at level 7 of the FHEQ/SCQF level 11 on the FQHEIS and the final outcomes of the qualifications themselves meet the expectations of the descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 7/level 11 in full. Study at bachelor's level is integrated with study at master's level and the programmes are designed to meet the qualification descriptors in full at level 6 of the FHEQ/SCQF level 10 on the FQHEIS as well as those at level 7 of the FHEQ/level 11 of the FQHEIS. Such qualifications are often termed 'integrated master's' as an acknowledgement of the prior period of study at lower levels (which typically meets the expectations of the descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 6/level 10).
- First degrees in medicine, dentistry and veterinary science comprise an integrated programme of study and professional practice spanning several levels. While the final outcomes of the qualifications themselves typically meet the expectations of the descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 7/level 11, these qualifications may often retain, for historical reasons, titles of Bachelor of Medicine, and Bachelor of Surgery, Bachelor of Dental Surgery, Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine or Bachelor of Veterinary Science, and are abbreviated to MBChB or BM BS, BDS, BVetMed and BVSc respectively. The use of the title 'Dr' by medical doctors is a historical abbreviation for the profession; it does not indicate a qualification at doctoral level (level 8 on the FHEQ/SCQF level 12 on the FQHEIS).
- In Scotland a small number of universities (Aberdeen, Glasgow, Edinburgh and St Andrews (the Scottish Ancients) have a long tradition of labelling certain undergraduate academic degrees as Master of Arts 'MA'. This title reflects historic Scottish custom and practice; there is no implication

that the outcomes of the programmes are at SCQF level 11 on the FQHEIS. These programmes are at SCQF level 9 or 10 on the FQHEIS.

- The Master of Arts (MA) awards granted by the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge are not academic qualifications. The MA is normally granted, on application, to graduates of these universities with a bachelor's degree. No further study or assessment is required, but the recipient may be required to pay a fee. At the University of Oxford, the MA may be granted during or after the twenty-first term from matriculation, and at the University of Cambridge the MA may be granted six years after the end of the first term.

Doctoral Degree Descriptor

Doctoral Degree Descriptor for a higher education qualification at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 12 on *The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland (FQHEIS)* and level 8 on *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of Degree-Awarding Bodies in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)*.⁶ The descriptor provided for this level of the frameworks is for any doctoral degree which should meet the descriptor in full. This qualification descriptor should also be used as a reference point for other level 12/level 8 qualifications.

Doctoral degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

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

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences
- continue to undertake pure and/or applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas or approaches.

And holders will have:

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent environments.

Guidance:

- Doctoral degrees are awarded for the creation and interpretation, construction and/ or exposition of knowledge which extends the forefront of a discipline, usually through original research.
- Holders of doctoral degrees are able to conceptualise, design and implement projects for the generation of significant new knowledge and/or understanding. Holders of doctoral degrees have the qualities needed for employment that require both the ability to make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields and an innovative approach to tackling and solving problems.
- Doctoral programmes that may have a substantial taught element in addition to the research component (for example, professional doctorates), lead usually to awards which include the name of the discipline in their title (for example, EdD for Doctor of Education or DClInPsy for Doctor of

⁶ *The Frameworks for HE Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies (2014)*, [Qualifications Frameworks \(qaa.ac.uk\)](http://Qualifications Frameworks (qaa.ac.uk)), accessed 25.07.22

Clinical Psychology). Professional doctorates aim to develop an individual's professional practice and to support them in producing a contribution to (professional) knowledge.

- The titles PhD and DPhil are commonly used for doctoral degrees awarded on the basis of original research.
- Achievement of outcomes consistent with the qualification descriptor for the doctoral degree normally requires study equivalent to three full-time calendar years.
- Higher doctorates may be awarded in recognition of a substantial body of original research undertaken over the course of many years. Typically, a portfolio of work that has been previously published in a peer-refereed context is submitted for assessment. Most degree awarding bodies restrict candidacy to graduates or their own academic staff of several years' standing.

SCHEDULE 6.4: SANCTIONS – RESEARCH MISCONDUCT (RESEARCH DEGREES)

Please also refer to [Regulation A3, Section 2, paragraph 10](#).

Reprimand: Written warning, retained by the Dean of School/Dean of Graduate School in the research student file. This sanction would be appropriate only if University staff were satisfied the misconduct was minor, and the first known case of misconduct.

Exclusion of work + opportunity to redo: Exclusion of affected work and opportunity for the work to be redone within a specified period.

Exclusion of work + no opportunity to redo: Exclusion of affected work and no opportunity for the work to be redone.

Suspension for specified period:

A recommendation to the Vice-Principal for Academic Development and Student Experience, acting with delegated authority on behalf of the Principal, for the immediate suspension of enrolment and all corresponding rights of the student, including the use of University facilities, for a specified period.

Termination of Enrolment:

A recommendation to the Principal (via the Vice-Principal for Academic Development and Student Experience) for the student's immediate termination of enrolment (including all corresponding rights), discontinuation of studies and exclusion from the University's facilities and properties.

The recommendation may also include a request to permanently deny the student any future rights of application and enrolment to the University. Where this sanction is imposed on a migrant student, the University shall report this decision to the UK Visas and Immigration service.

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.