



<b>Name of Policy:</b>	<b>Regulations for the Award of the University's Degrees of Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy by Supervised Research</b>
<b>Purpose of Policy:</b>	<b>To provide a framework for admission to, study of and conferment of Research Degrees at Staffordshire University</b>
<b>Intended audience(s):</b>	<b>All students registered on Staffordshire University awards and staff</b>
<b>Approval for this policy given by:</b>	<b>Academic Board</b>
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<b>Authorising department:</b>	<b>Student and Academic Services</b>



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**Candidates should also consult the University's MPhil/PhD Code of Practice.**

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## General Principles

1. Staffordshire University (hereinafter referred to as 'the University') will award the degrees of Master of Philosophy (MPhil) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) to registered candidates who successfully complete approved programmes of supervised research. These awards shall be consistent and comparable in standard with those of other institutions of higher education.
2. Programmes of research may be proposed in any field of study subject to the requirement that the proposed programme is capable of leading to scholarly research and to its presentation for assessment by appropriate examiners. All candidates for research degree programmes shall be considered for admission on their academic merits and without reference to the concerns or interests of any associated funding body.
3. The University will encourage co-operation with industrial, commercial, professional or research establishments for the purposes of research leading to research degree awards.

Such co-operation will be intended:

- (a) to encourage outward-looking and relevant research;
  - (b) to extend the candidate's own experience and perspectives of the work;
  - (c) to provide a wider range of experience and expertise to assist in the development of the project;
  - (d) to be to the mutual benefit of the University and the co-operating establishment;
  - (e) where appropriate, to enable the candidate to become a member of a wider research community.
4. Formal co-operation may be with one or more external bodies, which will be referred to as Collaborating Establishments. Such formal collaboration should normally involve a candidate using facilities and other resources provided jointly by the University and the Collaborating Establishment(s), and will normally include joint supervision of the candidate.
  5. In such cases a formal letter from the Collaborating Establishment(s) confirming the agreed arrangements should be submitted with the application. Such arrangements will be governed by a signed Agreement between the University and the Collaborating Establishment(s).
  6. The University may approve an institution as a Validated Partner Institution. Research students registered at Validated Partner Institutions will submit for a Staffordshire University award. Such arrangements will be governed by a signed Agreement between the University and the Validated Partner Institution.
  7. The Graduate School Committee shall on behalf of the University's Academic Board ensure that the University's research degree regulations are complied with in all matters relating to the registration, progress and examination of higher degrees by research.

## Admission of Students

8. A person may apply to register as a research degree candidate for the degree of:
- (a) Master of Philosophy; or
  - (b) Master of Philosophy with possibility of transfer to Doctor of Philosophy; or
  - (c) Doctor of Philosophy.

9. The University offers research degrees:
- (a) With attendance
  - (b) By distance learning

Candidates may register either full-time or part-time on either of the above.

10. It is also possible to combine periods of study at a distance with periods in attendance at the University. In some instances this is required and a minimum period of study in attendance at the University will be set. Such arrangements would be agreed as part of the admissions process.

Overseas non EU candidates combining study at a distance with periods of study in attendance are required to ensure that all appropriate immigration requirements are met.

11. Distance learning research degree candidates are not normally required to attend the University, except normally for examination. Contact with the University must be maintained during the registration period at the same frequency as if the candidate were in full attendance at the University. The suitability of a candidate for a distance learning programme will be assessed as part of the admissions process. The interview panel will establish that the applicant has the motivation and aptitude for study by distance learning and that resources will be available to undertake study at research degree level.
12. Where an arrangement involves a Collaborative Establishment (see regulations 4 and 5) the candidate must maintain contact with their University supervisor(s) at the same frequency as if they were in full attendance at the University. Examination of the research degree will normally be held at the University.
13. In approving an application the University will satisfy itself that:
- (a) The candidate has the requisite educational qualifications.
  - (b) The candidate is eligible to study in the UK for those attending at the University.
  - (c) The candidate has met the stated minimum English proficiency qualification for the research degree programme and has provided evidence of sufficient command of written and spoken English to complete satisfactorily any programme of related studies, and to prepare and defend a thesis in English. The University's normal requirement is an overall IELTS score of 6.5 or equivalent with at least IELTS 6 obtained in each component. Each subject area has a minimum requirement within a range of IELTS 6-7.5.
  - (d) The candidate is embarking on a viable research programme.
  - (e) The candidate is aware of the commitment required to undertake a research programme and is motivated and has the potential to complete the programme.

- (f) The supervision arrangements are appropriate and likely to be sustained.
  - (g) The University, Collaborating Establishment or Validated Partner Institution is able to provide appropriate resources and facilities for the conduct of research in the area of the research programme.
  - (h) If applying to study by distance learning, the candidate has realistic expectations and the ability to succeed via this mode of study. The candidate must have access to adequate resources and facilities for the conduct of research activity in the area of the research programme;
  - (i) The candidate has a valid Academic Technology Approval Certificate (ATAS) where required.
14. All candidates will be asked to provide the names of two referees who can verify their academic qualifications and aptitude to study at research degree level.
15. All candidates will be interviewed by a panel normally consisting of:
- (a) A member of the School experienced in supervision of Research Degree students
  - (b) the proposed Principal Supervisor
16. The interview panel will make a recommendation as to whether to accept the applicant onto a research degree to the School Research Degree Coordinator . Distance learning applications will also be referred to the Graduate School Committee for final approval. The Graduate School Committee will note the outcomes of all admissions decisions.
17. Successful applicants will receive an offer letter from the University's Admissions Office.
18. A candidate may be permitted to register for another course of study concurrently with the research degree registration, provided that either the research degree registration or the other course of study is by part-time study and that, in the opinion of the University, the dual registration will not impede the progress of the research programme.
19. An applicant for registration on the degree of MPhil or MPhil with possibility of transfer to PhD will normally hold either at least an honours degree of 2:1 or above in a relevant subject of a University in the UK or a qualification which is regarded by the University as equivalent to such an honours degree whether awarded in the UK or overseas.
20. An applicant holding qualifications other than those mentioned above will be considered on his/her merits and in relation to the nature and scope of the programme of work proposed. In considering an applicant in this category, the interview panel will look for evidence of the candidate's ability and background knowledge in relation to the proposed research. Professional

experience, publications, written reports or other appropriate evidence of accomplishment shall be taken into consideration.

21. Direct registration for the degree of PhD may be permitted to an applicant who holds a Master's degree awarded by either the University or another UK university or an overseas Master's degree of equivalent standard, provided that the Master's degree is in a discipline which is appropriate to the proposed research and that the Master's degree included training in research and the execution of a research project. Direct registration for the degree of PhD may also be permitted to an applicant who, although lacking a Master's degree, has an honours degree of 2:1 or above (or equivalent) in an appropriate discipline and has had appropriate research or professional experience at postgraduate level, which has resulted in published work, written reports or other appropriate evidence of accomplishment.
22. A candidate may undertake a programme of research in which the candidate's own creative work forms, as a point of origin or reference, a significant part of the intellectual enquiry. Such creative work may be in any field (for instance, fine art, design, engineering and technology, creative writing, film), but will have been undertaken as part of the research programme. The application for registration will set out the form of the candidate's intended submission and of the proposed methods of assessment, which must be agreed with the proposed supervisors. The final submission will be accompanied by a permanent record of the creative work.
23. A candidate may undertake a programme of research in which the principal focus is the preparation of a scholarly edition of a text or texts, or other original artefacts. The final submission will include a copy of the edited text(s) or collection of artefact(s), appropriate textual and explanatory annotations, and a substantial introduction and critical commentary, which set the text in the relevant historical, theoretical or critical context.
24. A candidate whose work forms part of a larger group project may register for a research degree. In such cases the programme of research to be undertaken by the candidate should in itself be distinguishable for the purposes of assessment and be appropriate for the category of registration and level of award being sought. The application should indicate clearly the candidate's individual contribution and its relationship to the group project.
25. Where a research degree project is part of a piece of funded research, the interview panel will establish to its satisfaction that the terms on which the research is funded do not detract from the fulfillment of the objectives and requirements of the candidate's research degree.
26. All research degree candidates must adhere to the University's Intellectual Property and Ethical Review Policies.
27. An applicant may apply to transfer their registration to the University from another UK Higher Education Institution. In such cases the following additional evidence should be provided as part of the admissions process:

- a) A supporting statement from the candidate outlining the reasons for the transfer;
  - b) A written statement from the former institution agreeing to the transfer and confirming the status of the student's registration and details of the student's progress;
  - c) Where the candidate has had access to specialist equipment and resources, a written statement from the former institution confirming that these will be made available to the student in order that they can complete the research project.
28. Where the transfer of registration from another UK Higher Education Institution is approved, the minimum and maximum registration periods for a Direct PhD will normally apply. In exceptional circumstances a shorter registration period may be approved by the Graduate School Committee, however in all cases a minimum registration period of one year will be required.
29. The University may approve an application from a person proposing to work mainly outside the UK, provided that arrangements are set out and agreed as part of the registration process.

## Registration

30. Once a candidate has been accepted onto a research degree programme he/she must formally enrol with the University by the date specified in the offer letter. From the date of enrolment a candidate is considered to be registered for the research degree and must follow the minimum and maximum registration periods as set out in paragraph 30 below.
31. Registration begins from the date of enrolment with the University. The minimum and maximum periods of registration must be adhered to and are as follows:

	<u>Minimum</u>	<u>Maximum</u>
<b>MPhil</b>		
Full-time	12 months	24 months
Part-time	24 months	48 months

### **PhD [via transfer from MPhil registration and including that period of MPhil registration]**

Full-time	30 months	48 months
Part-time	60 months	96 months

## **PhD [direct]**

Full-time	24 months	48 months
Part-time	48 months	96 months

A candidate must submit their thesis to the University before the expiry of the maximum period of registration.

32. Where a candidate changes from full-time to part-time study their minimum and maximum registration periods shall be re-calculated to take into account that they will be a part-time candidate for the remainder of their registration. Where a candidate changes from part-time to full-time study, their minimum and maximum registration periods shall be re-calculated to take into account that they will be a full-time candidate for the remainder of their registration.
33. Where a candidate has previously undertaken research as a registered candidate for a research degree at the University, the Graduate School Committee may approve a shorter than usual registration period which takes account of all or part of the time already spent by the candidate on such research.
34. The majority of work submitted for examination for a research degree of the University must have been undertaken after the initial registration for the research degree. Exceptions may only be permitted for a candidate transferring their registration from another institution (see regulations 26 and 27).
35. Candidates for the MPhil or PhD must throughout their programme also undertake a minimum level of professional development (normally six professional development activities in each year of study for full-time students and three for part-time).
36. A candidate must enrol with the University as a research degree student each academic year. Failure to enrol with the University each academic year will be viewed as evidence that a candidate has discontinued their programme of research.
37. A candidate will pay such fees as may be determined by the University. Non-payment of fees will result in the candidate's registration being withdrawn.

## **Placements**

38. A research degree student may apply to the Graduate School Committee to undertake a work placement as part of their programme of study. A placement may take place in another University, a research laboratory, a research institute, a Local Authority Public Health Department, an NHS Department, or an industrial research division.

39. The work placement should be an integral part of the candidate's programme of study. Following completion of the placement the candidate must produce a written post-placement report showing how the experience has contributed to their research programme and how this experience will be included in the final thesis. This report must be submitted to the student's supervisor within one month of the completion of the work placement and should also be considered by the Graduate School Committee.
40. The candidate must still complete their research degree programme within the maximum period of registration.

### **Supervision**

41. A candidate registered for a research degree will normally have a supervision team consisting of a Principal Supervisor, who can offer expertise in the proposed field of study, and one or more additional supervisors.
42. A Principal Supervisor must be an employee of the University, have a Level 8 qualification and have either previously supervised to successful completion a minimum of one postgraduate research degree (at least at the level they are intending to supervise), or have successfully completed the University's Research Degrees Supervision Module and be actively engaged in research and/or consultancy at an appropriate level for the supervision of the award. In exceptional circumstances an employee of the University without the above requisite qualifications or experience may apply to the Graduate School Committee to be appointed to a Principal Supervisor role.
43. A second supervisor must have a record of research activity in an area relevant to the research degree candidate's work.
44. A member of the University's staff who is registered for a postgraduate research degree shall be eligible to supervise another research degree candidate, as a second supervisor only, providing that he/she can satisfy the Graduate School Committee that no conflict of interest will arise between the proposed supervisor's body of work and the programme of research put forward by the candidate for registration.
45. In addition to the supervisory team, an adviser or advisers may be appointed to contribute some specialised knowledge or a link with an external organisation.
46. If a supervisor leaves the University's employment or is unable to continue in that role, the University will use all reasonable endeavours to identify another member of staff to take over the supervisory role. However, there may be cases in which there is no-one within the University who has the relevant subject expertise. In such circumstances, the School Research Degree Coordinator will discuss with the student all possible options, which may include arranging for a supervisor who has left to continue as an additional supervisor, appointing a new external supervisor or facilitating the student's transfer to the supervisor's new institution or another institution if appropriate.

47. Any change proposed to a candidate's supervision arrangements must be approved by the relevant Head of Department and Graduate School Committee. .

### **Monitoring the Progress of Candidates**

48. The School Research Degrees Coordinator and the Graduate School Committee Graduate School Committee will monitor the progress of candidates through Early Stage Review, Late Stage Review and Annual Progress Review Reports. Supervisors and School Research Degree Coordinators have responsibility for ensuring that Early Stage Review, Late Stage Review and Annual Progress Reviews occur for each candidate at the appropriate time and for considering and approving the outcomes. The Graduate School Committee will monitor the progress of all candidates.

### **Induction**

49. Induction of new students will be carried out within the first term of registration. Induction will include planning the anticipated dates for Early Stage Review and Late Stage Review based on the timescales outlined below. These dates will be noted by the Graduate School Committee. During induction each student will also undertake a skills audit with their supervisor(s) in order to determine a personal, researcher and professional development plan (PDP).

### **Early Stage Review**

50. All candidates will normally undertake Early Stage Review (ESR) within six to 12 months of initial registration (12-24 months for part-time candidates). The purpose of ESR is to ensure that the candidate is progressing in line with the plan of work agreed with their supervisors. For candidates registered for an MPhil with possibility of transferring registration to PhD, the ESR will additionally consider whether the candidate has made sufficient progress for their registration to be transferred from MPhil to PhD.
51. The ESR will incorporate the following:
- 1) The submission of an Early Stage Portfolio prepared by the candidate. The Portfolio will be 5000 words maximum, not including references, which will include the following:
    - i. a literature review;
    - ii. the research proposal and plan of work detailing progress so far (for candidates registered for an MPhil with possibility of transfer to PhD the plan should also outline how the project has evolved so as to be suitable for a PhD);

- iii. confirmation that ethical approval has been obtained for the research, where required;
- iv. results to date (if any); and
- v. the candidate's latest personal, researcher and professional development plan (PDP), along with an evaluation of professional development undertaken over the period since induction and a schedule of development activities to be undertaken during the next year.

2) An interview.

52. The interview will normally take place on one of the University's campuses, or the campus of a Validated Partner Institution where the candidate has been registered for the award through that institution. The Graduate School Committee may approve the ESR Interview to take place via video link, subject to the written agreement of the candidate and the interview panel and to the technology being of a satisfactory standard. In the event that the technology does not permit the interview to be conducted with the involvement of all parties to a satisfactory standard, the interview should be stopped and rearranged.
53. The Graduate School Committee will approve the ESR Interview Panel, which will comprise:
- A member of the School with expertise in the general subject area.
  - A member of another School who is actively involved in the supervision of PhD students.
54. The Principal Supervisor may attend with the agreement of the candidate, but may not contribute to discussions, unless specifically asked to do so by the Panel.
55. The candidate will submit the Early Stage Portfolio at least two weeks ahead of the ESR Interview date.
56. The possible outcomes of the ESR are:

For candidates registered on an MPhil:

- Continue on MPhil registration
- Continue MPhil with conditions – the satisfactory completion of these conditions must be confirmed by the ESR Panel before the ESR is complete.
- Recommendation to the Graduate School Committee Graduate School Committee that the candidate be withdrawn from the programme.

For candidates registered on an MPhil with possibility of progression to PhD:

- Transfer to PhD
- Transfer to PhD with conditions – the satisfactory completion of these conditions must be confirmed by the ESR Panel before transfer can be progressed.
- Continue on MPhil and write up thesis for submission.
- Recommendation to the Graduate School Committee Graduate School Committee that the candidate be withdrawn from the programme.

For candidates on direct PhD registration:

- Continue on PhD registration
- Continue PhD with conditions – the satisfactory completion of these conditions must be confirmed by the ESR Panel before the ESR is complete.
- Transfer to MPhil registration and write up thesis for submission.
- Recommendation to the Graduate School Committee Graduate School Committee that the candidate be withdrawn from the programme.

57. The ESR Interview panel will complete a report, outlining their recommendation, for approval by the Graduate School Committee.
58. The interview panel may indicate informally their recommendation on the result of the ESR to the candidate but they will make it clear that the final decision rests with the Graduate School Committee Graduate School Committee .

Graduate School Committee

60. The Graduate School Committee will make the final decision as to whether a candidate should be withdrawn.

### **Late Stage Review**

61. All PhD candidates will undertake Late Stage Review (LSR) 18-24 months following initial registration for full-time candidates and 36-48 months following initial registration for part-time candidates.
62. The purpose of LSR is to ensure that the candidate is progressing to agreed timescales and to prepare them for the PhD examination.
63. The Late Stage Review will incorporate the following:
  - 1) A Late Stage Review Portfolio prepared by the candidate and including the following:
    - i. a brief overview report of between 1500 and 3000 words not including references and appendices. The overview report should

be an evaluation of the work so far, including a summary and evaluation of results and plans for completion of the programme of study. References should be made to completed chapters, which should be included as appendices;

- ii. completed chapters and/or articles; and
- iii. the candidate's latest personal, researcher and professional development plan (PDP) along with an evaluation of professional development undertaken during their studies to date and a schedule of future development activities to be undertaken in the period until thesis submission.

2) An interview.

64. The Graduate School Committee will approve the LSR Interview Panel, which will comprise:
  - A member of the School with expertise in the general subject area.
  - A member of another School who is actively involved in the supervision of PhD students.
65. The Principal Supervisor may attend with the agreement of the candidate, but may not contribute to discussions, unless specifically asked to do so by the Panel.
66. The candidate will submit their Late Stage Portfolio at least two weeks ahead of the LSR Interview date.
67. The interview will normally take place at one of the University's campuses, or the campus of a Validated Partner Institution where the candidate has been registered for the award through that institution. The Graduate School Committee may approve the Late Stage Review Interview to take place via video link, subject to the written agreement of the candidate and the interview panel and to the technology being of a satisfactory standard. In the event that the technology does not permit the interview to be conducted with the involvement of all parties to a satisfactory standard, the interview should be stopped and rearranged.
68. The possible outcomes of the LSR are:
  - Continue on PhD registration
  - Continue PhD with conditions – the satisfactory completion of these conditions must be confirmed by the LSR Panel before the LSR is complete.
  - Transfer to MPhil registration and write up thesis for submission.
  - Recommendation to the Graduate School Committee Graduate School Committee that the candidate be withdrawn from the programme.
69. The LSR Panel will complete a report, outlining their recommendation, for approval by the Graduate School Committee.

70. The LSR Panel may indicate informally their recommendation on the result of the LSR to the candidate but they will make it clear that the final decision rests with the Graduate School Committee .

#### Graduate School Committee

72. The Graduate School Committee will make the final decision as to whether a candidate should be withdrawn.

### **Transfer of Registration from MPhil to PhD**

73. Following successful completion of the ESR a candidate on an MPhil award with possibility of transfer to PhD award will have their transfer to PhD confirmed by the School Research Degree Committee.

74. A candidate registered for the degree of MPhil only may apply to transfer their registration to PhD. In such cases the candidate should apply to the Graduate School Committee to have their registration extended to PhD. Such applications should be submitted together with a separate statement from the principal supervisor explaining the circumstances that have prompted the request to change the candidate's registration. If the Committee approves the candidate's application in principle, transfer of registration will only be confirmed following:

- For candidates yet to undertake an ESR: successful completion of an ESR
- For candidates who have already undertaken an ESR as an MPhil only student: successful completion of a LSR

The candidate will be required to demonstrate how the project has evolved so as to be suitable for a PhD.

### **Transfer of Registration from PhD to MPhil**

75. A candidate who is registered for the degree of PhD and who is unable to complete the approved programme of work may, at any time prior to the submission of the thesis for examination, apply to the Graduate School Committee for a change of registration to that of MPhil. When approving such an application, the Graduate School Committee will also approve the new registration timeframe.

76. Where a candidate has had their registration transferred to MPhil following a LSR they should normally complete the MPhil within six months of the date of the LSR (12 months for part-time candidates).

### **Annual Progress Review**

77. The University will monitor the academic progress of candidates on an annual basis either through the Early Stage Review, Late Stage Review, or through

the completion of an Annual Progress Review report, which will be considered by the Graduate School Committee.

78. Through these processes the Graduate School Committee will establish whether each candidate is still actively engaged on the research programme, is maintaining regular and frequent contact with the supervisors, is undertaking a programme of professional development and is making satisfactory progress. The Committee will take appropriate action, which may include the recommendation that the candidate's registration is withdrawn, if the supervisors and the School indicate that there has been a lack of academic progress. Unless the candidate can provide satisfactory evidence to the Committee to justify the continuation or extension of the registration, the Graduate School Committee will formally require the candidate to withdraw from the programme.
79. Where the candidate is prevented, by ill health or other cause, from making progress with the research, their registration may be suspended by the Graduate School Committee normally for not more than one year at a time. In making a decision as to whether registration may be suspended the Graduate School Committee will take into account the currency of the candidate's research.
80. The Graduate School Committee may extend a candidate's period of registration, normally for not more than one year at a time. A candidate seeking such an extension should apply to the Committee before the maximum period of registration has expired. In making a decision as to whether registration may be extended the Graduate School Committee will take into account the currency of the candidate's research.
81. Where a candidate has discontinued their research and withdrawn from the programme this shall be notified to the Graduate School Committee .

### **Examination Arrangements**

82. The examination for the MPhil and PhD will have two stages: firstly the submission and preliminary assessment of the thesis and secondly its defence by oral or approved alternative examination.
83. The Principal Supervisor shall nominate on the appropriate form the examiners whom it is proposed shall conduct the examination. The form must be submitted by the Graduate School Committee for approval. The examination must not take place until the examination arrangements have been approved. In special circumstances the Graduate School Committee may act directly to appoint examiners and arrange the examination of a candidate.
84. An application for approval of research degree examination arrangements shall be approved for a period of two years. If an examination has not taken place within two years of the date of approval of the application, then an

application for renewal of the examination arrangements shall be submitted to the Graduate School Committee .

85. A copy of the thesis will be sent to each examiner, together with the examiner's preliminary report form, the University's regulations and notes of guidance to examiners.
86. Following submission of the thesis, the examiners may require the candidate to display or demonstrate the supporting material that is the product of the programme of research and referred to in the thesis. Equally, candidates may request the opportunity to display or demonstrate the supporting material.
87. The examiners will complete and return their preliminary reports to the University at least five working days before the oral examination is due to take place. The second stage of the examination shall not take place until the preliminary reports of the examiners have been submitted.
88. An Independent Chair selected from the list approved by the Graduate School Committee Graduate School Committee must attend each MPhil and PhD viva examination to ensure the examination is conducted and recommendations of the examiners are presented, wholly in accordance with the University's regulations.
89. A candidate will normally be examined orally on the programme of work and on the field of study in which the programme lies. Where for reasons of sickness, disability or comparable valid cause the Graduate School Committee is satisfied that a candidate would be under serious disadvantage if required to undergo an oral examination, an alternative form of examination may be approved. Such approval will not be given on the grounds that the candidate's knowledge of the language in which the thesis is presented is inadequate.
90. The oral examination will be held in English and normally on a campus of the University or the campus of a Validated Partner Institution where the candidate has been registered for the award through that institution.
91. The Graduate School Committee may exceptionally give approval for an oral examination to be held elsewhere in the UK or abroad. Any decision to hold an oral examination off campus is subject to the appointment of an experienced internal examiner and the written agreement of the candidate, all the examiners and the Independent Chair. Where it is proposed to hold an oral examination off campus, the candidate and Principal Supervisor should submit an application to the Graduate School Committee.
92. In exceptional circumstances, the Graduate School Committee may give approval for an oral examination to be held by video link. Any decision to hold an oral examination by video link is subject to the appointment of an experienced internal examiner and the written agreement of the candidate, all the examiners and the Independent Chair. Such examinations should

normally be held at a British Council office. Where it is proposed to hold an oral examination by video link, the candidate and Principal Supervisor should submit an application to the Graduate School Committee. In the event that the technology does not permit the oral examination to be conducted with the involvement of all parties to a satisfactory standard, the viva should be stopped and rearranged.

93. A supervisor may, with the consent of the candidate, attend the oral examination but cannot participate in the discussion unless specifically asked to do so by the Chair of the examination panel. The supervisor must withdraw prior to the deliberations of the examiners on the outcome of the examination.
94. The examination panel will make a recommendation to the Graduate School Committee on the outcome of the candidate's examination and will make a final recommendation to the University on the candidate's revised or re-examined thesis.
95. In any instance where the Graduate School Committee is made aware of a failure to comply with all the procedures of the examination process, it may declare the examination null and void and appoint new examiners.
96. The power to confer the degree of MPhil or PhD will rest with the University; this power is delegated by Academic Board to the Graduate School Committee.
97. The degree of MPhil or PhD may be awarded posthumously on the basis of a thesis completed by a candidate, which is ready for submission for examination. In such cases the Graduate School Committee will seek evidence that the candidate would have been likely to have been successful had the oral examination taken place.
98. Where evidence of cheating or plagiarism in the preparation of the thesis or other irregularities in the conduct of the examination come to light subsequent to the recommendation of the examiners, the Graduate School Committee will consider the matter, if necessary in consultation with the examiners, and take appropriate action in accordance with the University's Academic Award Regulations.

## **Examiners**

99. A candidate will be examined by at least two and normally not more than three examiners, of whom at least one will be an external examiner.

An internal examiner shall:

- (a) be a member of staff of the University; or
- (b) be a member of staff of the candidate's Collaborating Establishment; and
- (c) shall normally be an expert in the subject area.

External examiners shall:

- a) be independent of the University and where applicable the candidate's Collaborating Establishment;
- b) not have acted previously as the candidate's supervisor or adviser;
- c) not have been a member of staff or student of the University within the last five years;
- d) not be an employee of a University partner;
- e) not be a member of the University's Board of Governors;
- f) not be an examiner for a taught course of the University;
- g) not have a close personal connection (for example relative) with or be a close working colleague with any member of the supervisory team;
- h) not have published within the previous five years with any of the candidate's supervisors.

- 100. An external examiner should normally hold, or have recently held, an academic appointment in a recognized University. In certain circumstances, however, it may be appropriate to appoint from outside the higher education system e.g. industry or the professions. In such cases two external examiners shall be appointed, one with appropriate academic experience.
- 101. The candidate's current or former supervisors or advisers cannot be appointed as examiners.
- 102. Where the candidate is also a member of the permanent staff of the University, Validated Partner Institution or Collaborating Establishment, a second external examiner will be appointed.
- 103. Examiners will be qualified to at least the level they will be examining, be experienced in research in the general area of the candidate's thesis and have experience as a specialist in the topic(s) to be examined. The examination team should have a minimum of three previous examinations at the level to be examined.
- 104. The Graduate School Committee will ensure that the same external examiner is not approved so frequently that his/her familiarity with the School/School might prejudice objective judgment. External examiners should not be appointed twice consecutively from the same institution for any one School.
- 105. Once the examination team has been appointed by the Graduate School Committee the supervisors and the candidate must not have any contact with the examiners regarding the examination.
- 106. The University will determine the fees and expenses of the examiners.

### **The Candidate's Responsibilities in the Examination Process**

- 107. The candidate will ensure that the thesis is submitted before the expiry of the registration period.

108. At least six months prior to the anticipated submission date, the candidate will notify the Graduate School Committee of their intention to submit their thesis. This will also be noted by the Graduate School Committee. The title of the thesis will be finalized at this point. Any exceptional subsequent changes to the thesis title will require approval from the Graduate School Committee.
109. The submission of the thesis for examination will be at the sole discretion of the candidate. While a candidate would be unwise to submit the thesis for examination against the advice of the supervisors, it is his/her right to do so. Equally, candidates should not assume that a supervisor's agreement to the submission of a thesis guarantees the award of the degree.
110. The candidate will take no part in the arrangement of the examination and will have no formal contact with the examiners.
111. The candidate will confirm that the thesis has not been submitted for a comparable academic award. The candidate will not be precluded from incorporating in the thesis work which has already been submitted for a degree or comparable award at the University or another institution, provided that it is indicated in the thesis which work has been incorporated.

## **The Thesis**

112. It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that the thesis format is in accordance with the requirements of the University, as outlined in Appendix A. Where a candidate wishes to submit in a format which deviates from the University's requirements, this will require the express permission of the Graduate School Committee.
113. All higher degrees by research must reach a standard of written English and academic communication appropriate for the topic and the level of award, and examiners will be asked to approve this element of the candidate's work. All theses must be presented in English.
114. There shall be an abstract of approximately 300 words bound into the thesis, which will provide a synopsis of the thesis stating the nature and scope of the work undertaken and the contribution made to the knowledge of the subject treated.
115. The thesis will include a statement of the candidate's objectives and will acknowledge published or other sources of material consulted and any assistance received.
116. Where a candidate's research programme is part of a collaborative group project, the thesis will indicate clearly the candidate's individual contribution and the extent of the collaboration.
117. The candidate will be free to publish material in advance of the thesis submission but reference will be made in the thesis to any such work. Copies of published material should either be bound in with the thesis submitted for

examination, or placed in an adequately secured pocket at the end of the thesis.

118. The text of the thesis should not exceed the following length (excluding ancillary data in appendices):

For a PhD	80,000 words
For an MPhil	40,000 words

Candidates should appreciate that the word limits shown above are maxima and that a well-written thesis may contain fewer words than the maxima, particularly when the thesis is supported by other material not in a written form.

119. Where the submission is accompanied by material in other than written form or the research involves creative writing or the preparation of a scholarly edition, a written thesis should normally be included.
120. Theses should be submitted for examination in a temporarily bound form which is sufficiently secure to ensure that pages cannot be added or removed. An electronic copy of the thesis should also be submitted. The copies of the thesis submitted for examination will remain the property of the University but the copyright in the thesis will be vested in the candidate.
121. Where a candidate or the University wishes the thesis to remain confidential for a period of time after completion of the work, application should be made to the Graduate School Committee either at the time of initial registration, at Early Stage Review or Late Stage Review. The Graduate School Committee will normally only approve an application for confidentiality in order to enable a patent application to be lodged or to protect commercially or politically sensitive material. A thesis will not be restricted in this way in order to protect research leads. In cases where the need for confidentiality emerges at a subsequent stage, a special application for the thesis to remain confidential after submission should be made immediately to the Graduate School Committee.
122. The normal maximum period of confidentiality permitted is two years from the date of the oral examination. However, in exceptional circumstances the Graduate School Committee may approve a longer period on receipt of an appropriate rationale and supporting evidence.
123. Where the Graduate School Committee has agreed that the confidential nature of the candidate's work is such as to preclude the thesis being made freely available in the library of the University (and Collaborating Establishment, if any) and, in the case of a PhD, the British Library, the thesis will, immediately on completion of the programme of work, be retained by the University on restricted access and, for a time not exceeding the approved period, will only be made available to those who were directly involved in the project.

## The Examination

124. The examination shall have two stages:

- (a) The candidate's submission of the thesis and the examiners' independent preliminary assessment of it;
- (b) The defence of the thesis by the candidate by oral examination or approved alternative assessment.

125. In making a judgement on both the thesis and the oral examination (viva voce), examiners will consider the following criteria:

- Whether the thesis represents a significant contribution to knowledge of the subject through:
  - the exercise of independent critical powers
  - competence in the investigation of the chosen topic(s)
  - competence in undertaking a critical study of the chosen topic(s)
- Whether the thesis provides evidence of originality.
- Whether the presentation of the thesis is satisfactory and the standard of written English and academic communication is appropriate to the discipline and the level of award.
- Whether the title of the thesis is appropriate.
- Whether the thesis abstract is acceptable.
- In the case of a candidate whose research programme is part of a collaborative group project, whether the thesis indicates clearly the individual contribution and the extent of the collaboration.

126. The MPhil shall be awarded to a candidate:

- who has carried out original work or an ordered and critical exposition of existing knowledge;
- whose thesis demonstrates an appreciation of the relation of the research to existing work in the field;
- whose thesis demonstrates an understanding of research methods appropriate to the chosen field;
- who has presented and defended the thesis by oral examination, or approved alternative examination, to the satisfaction of the examiners.

127. The PhD shall be awarded to a candidate:

- who has made an original contribution to knowledge, through the production of new knowledge and/or by the exercise of independent critical thought;
- whose thesis demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of the relation of the research to existing work in the field;

- whose thesis demonstrates an understanding of research methods appropriate to the chosen field;
  - who has presented and defended the thesis by oral examination, or approved alternative examination, to the satisfaction of the examiners.
128. Each examiner will read and examine the thesis and will submit, on the appropriate form, an independent preliminary report at least five working days before any oral or alternative form of examination is held. In completing the preliminary report, each examiner will consider whether the thesis provisionally satisfies the requirements of the degree and where possible will make an appropriate provisional recommendation subject to the outcome of any oral examination. Preliminary reports will be circulated amongst the examining team but will not be made available to the candidate.
129. Where the examiners are of the opinion that the thesis is so unsatisfactory that no useful purpose would be served by conducting an oral examination, they may recommend that the Graduate School Committee dispense with the oral examination and refer the thesis for further work. In such cases the examiners will provide the Graduate School Committee with written guidance for the candidate concerning the deficiencies of the thesis and the candidate will be required to resubmit in line with regulations 141-145 below. No subsequent resubmission will be permitted. The examiners will not recommend that a candidate fail outright without holding an oral examination or other approved alternative examination.
130. The oral examination of the research thesis will normally involve one or two external examiner(s) and an internal examiner and will be chaired by an independent Chair taken from the list approved by the Graduate School Committee. The oral examination will normally be held on one of the University's campuses in accordance with regulations 89-91 above.
131. Following the oral examination the examiners will, where they are in agreement, submit, on the appropriate form, a joint report and recommendation relating to the award of the degree to the Graduate School Committee. The preliminary reports and joint recommendation of the examiners will together provide sufficiently detailed comments on the scope and quality of the work to enable the Graduate School Committee to satisfy itself that the recommendation chosen is correct. Where the examiners are not in agreement, separate reports and recommendations will be submitted.

### **PhD Examination Outcomes**

132. Following the completion of the examination for a PhD the examiners will make one of the following recommendations to the Graduate School Committee:
1. *Direct award.* The examiners are satisfied that the thesis and its defence are of doctoral standard. The candidate should be awarded the degree of PhD without making any changes to his or her thesis.

2. *Revisions required.* The examiners are satisfied that the thesis and its defence are of doctoral standard, however the thesis requires revisions. These are normally to be completed within 6 months of the examination, although if numerous, the examiners can recommend up to 12 months. In such instances the following outcomes are available to the examiners:

- i. The candidate should be awarded the degree of PhD subject to amendments being made to the thesis to the satisfaction of the internal examiner. It is for the examiner to review these amendments, and to indicate to the Graduate School Committee whether they have been carried out appropriately.
- ii. The candidate should be awarded the degree of PhD subject to amendments being made to the thesis to the satisfaction of the external examiner. It is for the examiner to review these amendments, and to indicate to the Graduate School Committee whether they have been carried out appropriately.
- iii. The candidate should be awarded the degree of PhD subject to amendments being made to the thesis to the satisfaction of both examiners. It is for the examiners to review these amendments, and to indicate to the Graduate School Committee whether they have been carried out appropriately.

3. *Resubmission.* The examiners are not confident of the doctoral standing of the thesis and/or its defence, but believe this standard may be reached with further work.

In such instances significant revisions of the thesis are required, and the candidate should resubmit the work, normally within 12 months of the first examination. A further oral examination will then be held. Only one resubmission is permitted.

4. *Change of registration.* The examiners are not confident of the doctoral standing of thesis and its defence, nor do they believe that this standing could be attained. However, the Examiners do believe that the candidate has achieved some recognisable level of research which may be of the level appropriate to the degree of MPhil.

In such instances a revised thesis is to be submitted within 12 months of the first examination. On receipt of the thesis the examiners will determine whether a further oral examination is required.

5. *No award.* The examiners are not confident of the doctoral standing of thesis and its defence, nor do they believe that this standing could be attained.

The candidate should not be granted the degree of PhD and should not be permitted to be re-examined.

133. Where amendments to the thesis are required these should be made in accordance with the specific requirements of the examiners.
134. Examiners may indicate informally their recommendation on the result of the examination to the candidate but they will make it clear, through the Chair, that the final decision rests with the Graduate School Committee.
135. Where the examiners' recommendations are not unanimous, the Graduate School Committee may:
  - (a) accept a majority recommendation (provided that the majority recommendation includes at least one external examiner);
  - (b) accept the recommendation of the external examiner; or
  - (c) require the appointment of an additional external examiner.
136. Where the Graduate School Committee decides that the degree should not be awarded and that no resubmission be permitted, the examiners will prepare an agreed statement of the deficiencies of the thesis and the reason for their recommendation, which will be forwarded to the candidate.

### **MPhil Examination Outcomes**

137. Following the completion of the examination for an MPhil the examiners will make one of the following recommendations to the Graduate School Committee:
  1. *Direct award.* The examiners are satisfied that the thesis and its defence are of MPhil standard. The candidate should be awarded the degree of MPhil without making any changes to his or her thesis.
  2. *Revisions required.* The examiners are satisfied that the thesis and its defence are of MPhil standard, however the thesis requires revisions. These are normally to be completed within six months of the examination, although if numerous, the examiners can recommend up to 12 months. In such instances the following outcomes are available to the examiners:
    - i. The candidate should be awarded the degree of MPhil subject to amendments being made to the thesis to the satisfaction of the internal examiner. It is for the examiner to review these amendments, and to indicate to the University's Research Degree Sub-Committee whether they have been carried out appropriately.
    - ii. The candidate should be awarded the degree of MPhil subject to amendments being made to the thesis to the satisfaction of the external examiner. It is for the examiner to review these amendments, and to indicate to the Graduate School Committee whether they have been carried out appropriately.
    - iii. The candidate should be awarded the degree of MPhil subject to

amendments being made to the thesis to the satisfaction of both examiners. It is for the examiners to review these amendments, and to indicate to the Graduate School Committee whether they have been carried out appropriately.

3. *Resubmission.* The examiners are not confident of the MPhil standing of the thesis and/or its defence, but believe this standard may be reached with further work.

In such instances significant revisions of the thesis are required, and the candidate should resubmit the work, normally within 12 months of the first examination. A further oral examination will then be held. Only one resubmission is permitted.

4. *No award.* The examiners are not confident of the MPhil standing of the thesis and its defence, nor do they believe that this standing could be attained.

The candidate should not be granted the degree of MPhil and should not be permitted to be re-examined.

138. Where amendments to the thesis are required these should be made in accordance with the specific requirements of the examiners.
139. Examiners may indicate informally their recommendation on the result of the examination to the candidate but they will make it clear, through the Chair, that the final decision rests with the Graduate School Committee.
140. Where the examiners' recommendations are not unanimous, the Graduate School Committee may:
  - (a) accept a majority recommendation (provided that the majority recommendation includes at least one external examiner);
  - (b) accept the recommendation of the external examiner; or
  - (c) require the appointment of an additional external examiner.
141. Where the Graduate School Committee decides that the degree should not be awarded and that no resubmission be permitted, the examiners will prepare an agreed statement of the deficiencies of the thesis and the reason for their recommendation, which will be forwarded to the candidate.

### **MPhil and PhD Resubmissions**

142. One resubmission may be permitted subject to the candidate resubmitting within 12 months from the date of the notification of the outcome of the first examination.
143. The Graduate School Committee may require that an additional external examiner be appointed, or that alternative external examiner(s) be appointed for the re-examination.

144. The Graduate School Committee may exceptionally approve an extension to the resubmission period.
145. In all other respects the re-examination shall be conducted as the first examination.
146. Following the completion of the re-examination the examiners may recommend in accordance with the provisions set out in paragraphs 131 or 136 above, excepting that the option for a further resubmission shall not apply.
147. Where the examiners' recommendations are not unanimous, the Graduate School Committee may:
  - (a) accept a majority recommendation (provided that the majority recommendation includes at least one external examiner);
  - (b) accept the recommendation of the external examiner.

#### **Publication of Results and Completion of the Award**

148. The final recommendation of the examination team will be submitted to the next available meeting of the Graduate School Committee which has the authority on behalf of the University to award the degrees of PhD and MPhil.
149. The results of the candidate's assessment and the award for which they are recommended shall be published in an approved form and signed by the Chair of the Graduate School Committee.
150. The candidate shall have been deemed to have completed his/ her award on the date that the Graduate School Committee approves the final recommendation of the examiners.

#### **Final Thesis**

151. Following the award of the degree the candidate must submit one electronic copy of the final version of the thesis accompanied by the completed British Library Electronic Thesis On-line System (Ethos) form.
152. The final thesis shall include the following copyright text:

“This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.”
153. The electronic copy will be stored in the University Library repository for use by current students and staff and for dissemination and promotion of academic achievement to the wider community through the British Library Electronic Thesis On-line System (Ethos). Where approval has been given

for a thesis to remain confidential, the publication details will be recorded in the repository and through Ethos but the content will remain embargoed until such time as it can be released.

154. Procedures restricting access to a thesis may only be applied where previously agreed by the Graduate School Committee.

### **Certificates and Ceremonies**

155. Following receipt of the electronic copy of the final thesis the award certificate will be produced and the candidate will be invited to the next available award ceremony.

## **REVIEW OF DECISIONS MADE BY EARLY OR LATE STAGE REVIEW INTERVIEW PANELS**

### **General Principles**

156. Following the early and late stage reviews, research degree candidates shall have the right to request a review of the recommendation. Given the existence of procedures to resolve complaints and grievances during the period of study, alleged inadequacy of supervisory or other arrangements before an early or late stage review is not admissible grounds for requesting a review of a decision.
157. Requests for a review are therefore permitted **only** on the following grounds:
- a) That there were medical or other circumstances affecting the candidate's performance, which he/she was unable to divulge before the early or late stage review took place.
  - b) That there is evidence of procedural irregularity in the conduct of the review (including administrative error) of such a nature as to cause doubt as to whether the result might have been different had the irregularity not occurred.
  - c) That there is evidence of unfair or improper assessment on the part of one or more members of the Review Interview Panel.

DISAGREEMENT WITH THE ACADEMIC JUDGEMENT OF MEMBERS OF THE REVIEW INTERVIEW PANEL IN ASSESSING A STUDENT'S PERFORMANCE CANNOT IN ITSELF CONSTITUTE GROUNDS FOR A REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION BY THE CANDIDATE.

158. In the case of medical circumstances, a medical certificate will not be sufficient. A full medical report is required, the costs of which must be borne by the candidate. The report should include, where possible, the precise

dates of illness and comment on the effect of the illness on the candidate on the date of and immediately prior to the examination.

159. In the case of procedural irregularity or of unfair or improper assessment, claims must be substantiated with evidence of the allegations made.

## **PROCEDURES FOR CONSIDERING REQUESTS FOR A REVIEW**

160. Candidates must request a review within one month from the date of notification of the result. The Registrar, in consultation with the Chair of the Graduate School Committee (or nominee), shall determine whether late submissions will be considered.
161. The request for a review should be submitted in writing to the Registrar. The request must include:
- a) The candidate's full name, School and the title of the thesis.
  - b) Details of the decision, which has prompted the request for a review.
  - c) The names of the candidate's supervisors.
  - d) Full details of the grounds for the request with supporting evidence.
  - e) If these grounds relate to illness or other extenuating factors, full and valid reasons as to why this information was not made known prior to the early or late stage review.
162. The Registrar shall acknowledge receipt of a request for a review of the decision within seven working days.
163. The Registrar (or nominee), together with the Chair of the Graduate School Committee, shall make an assessment of the case to ascertain initially whether the request is based upon approved grounds as outlined in paragraphs 156 (a), (b) and (c). If the Chair of the Graduate School Committee was involved in the supervision or early or late stage review of the candidate, the Registrar shall nominate another member of the Graduate School Committee who has not been previously connected with the supervision or review of the candidate. In making that assessment, the Registrar (or nominee) and the Chair of the Graduate School Committee (or nominee) may consult with the Early/Late Stage Review Interview Panel, the candidate's supervisors or other persons as appropriate and may request a copy of the Interview Panel's report. The assessment shall be concluded and the outcome communicated to the student within 25 working days of receipt of the request for a review.
164. Should the Registrar (or nominee) and the Chair of the Graduate School Committee (or nominee) establish that the request for a review is based upon

approved grounds; the case must be dealt with according to the procedure in the following three sections.

165. If the Registrar (or nominee) and the Chair of the Graduate School Committee (or nominee) establish that the request for a review is not based upon approved grounds, then the candidate should receive a written explanation from the Registrar, which describes the reason or reasons why the request has been disallowed.

**A) PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH CASES BY CANDIDATES WHOSE PERFORMANCE WAS ALLEGEDLY AFFECTED BY ILLNESS OR OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES**

166. In a case where the candidate claims that his/her performance was adversely affected by illness or other circumstances, and, in the opinion of the Registrar (or nominee) and the Chair of the Graduate School Committee (or nominee), there appears to be no prima facie case for the decision of the examiners to be reviewed, the Registrar shall write to the candidate giving reasons why the request is not supported.
167. In cases where the candidate claims that his/her performance was adversely affected by illness or other circumstances, and, in the opinion of the Registrar in consultation with the Chair of the Graduate School Committee (or nominee), there appears to be a prima facie case for the decision of the Early/Late Stage Review Interview Panel to be reviewed, the Registrar will advise the Panel that there are grounds to review their decision and will ask them to re-convene in order to review their decision. It will not be necessary for the Research Degrees Review Panel to meet.
168. The Registrar shall inform the candidate that the Early/Late Stage Review Interview Panel has agreed to review their decision. The Panel, after considering the information presented to them, shall agree either to amend or to confirm their original decision.
169. Where the Early/Late Stage Review Interview Panel agree to amend their decision, but are uncertain as to the most appropriate alternative recommendation, they may seek additional evidence of the candidate's performance through a further interview.
170. Where the Early/Late Stage Review Interview Panel agree to confirm their decision, this will end the matter in cases based solely on medical circumstances.

**B) PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH CASES WHERE THERE IS EVIDENCE OF PROCEDURAL IRREGULARITY IN THE CONDUCT OF THE EARLEY/LATE STAGE REVIEW INTERVIEW PANEL**

171. The Research Degrees Review Panel will hear all such cases. Cases will be heard normally no longer than two months after a request for a review has

been submitted by the candidate. The Registrar (or nominee) will arrange the meeting.

172. The Registrar shall provide the Research Degrees Review Panel with:
  - a) The application for review with any supporting documentary evidence.
  - b) The report of the Early/Late Stage Review Interview Panel.
  - c) The regulations concerning the award of Research Degrees.
  - d) Copies of any other written information considered relevant by the Registrar.
  
173. The candidate shall be invited to attend the meeting of the Research Degrees Review Panel and shall be informed of his/her right to be accompanied by a person of his/her choosing who can speak on his/her behalf. Should the candidate choose to be represented, the name, address and brief biographical details of the representative must be submitted in writing to the Registrar not less than seven days before the appointed date of the Review Panel.
  
174. The proceedings of the Review Panel shall remain confidential to members of the Panel and the Graduate School Committee.
  - a) The candidate (or his/her representative) shall be asked to put his/her case in the presence of the Review Panel and to call such witnesses as s/he wishes.
  - b) The Review Panel will interview or receive a written response from at least one examiner with respect to the request for review.
  - c) The Review Panel shall have the authority to require any member of the University staff connected with the candidate's programme of research to present an oral or written report on the case under review.
  - d) The Review Panel shall have the opportunity to ask questions of each witness called by the candidate. The candidate may agree to answer questions put by the Review Panel as s/he wishes.
  - e) The candidate (or his/her representative) shall have an opportunity to respond to any statement or report made by the members of the University staff.
  - f) The candidate (or his/her representative) shall have the opportunity to sum up their case if s/he so wishes.

175. The Review Panel may recommend:
- a) That no grounds for a review of the Early/Late Stage Review decision have been established in which case the application shall be rejected.
  - b) That grounds for review have been established, in which case the Early/Late Stage Review Interview Panel shall be instructed by the Graduate School Committee to reconsider their decision in accordance with approved regulations and procedures.
176. The Early/Late Stage Review Interview Panel shall normally review their original decision as soon as possible after the meeting of the Research Degrees Review Panel, and normally not longer than two months after the meeting. The Registrar shall inform the candidate that the Early/Late Stage Review Interview Panel have been asked to review their original decision. The Panel, after duly considering the information made available to them, shall agree either to amend or confirm their original decision.
177. Where the Early/Late Stage Review Interview Panel agree to amend their decision, but are uncertain as to the most appropriate alternative recommendation, they may seek additional evidence of the candidate's performance through another interview.
178. The decision Early/Late Stage Review Interview Panel will be final and there shall be no further right of a request for a review by the candidate.
- C) PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH CASES WHERE THERE IS EVIDENCE OF UNFAIR OR IMPROPER ASSESSMENT ON THE PART OF ONE OR MORE EXAMINERS**
179. The Research Degrees Review Panel will hear all such cases. Cases will be heard normally no longer than two months after a request for a review has been submitted by the candidate. The Registrar (or nominee) will arrange the meeting.
180. The Registrar shall provide the Research Degrees Review Panel with:
- a) The application for review with any supporting documentary evidence.
  - b) The Early/Late Stage Review Interview Panel report.
  - c) The regulations concerning the award of Research Degrees.
  - d) Copies of any other written information considered relevant by the Registrar.
181. The candidate shall be invited to attend the meeting of the Research Degrees Review Panel and shall be informed of his/her right to be accompanied by a person of his/her choosing who can speak on his/her behalf. Should the

candidate opt to be represented, the name, address and brief biographical details of the representative must be submitted in writing to the Registrar not less than seven days before the appointed date of the Review Panel.

182. The proceedings of the Review Panel shall remain confidential to members of the Panel and the Graduate School Committee.
  - a) The candidate (or his/her representative) shall be asked to put his/her case in the presence of the Review Panel and to call such witnesses as he/she wishes.
  - b) The Review Panel shall have the authority to require any member of the University staff connected with the candidate's programme of research to present an oral or written report on the case under review.
  - c) The Review Panel shall have the opportunity to ask questions of each witness called by the candidate. The candidate may agree to answer questions put by the Review Panel if he/she wishes.
  - d) The candidate (or his/her representative) shall have an opportunity to respond to any statement or report made by members of the University staff.
  - e) The candidate (or his/her representative) shall have the opportunity to sum up their case if he/she so wishes.
  
183. The Review Panel may recommend:
  - a) That no grounds for a review of the decision of the Early/Late Stage Review Interview Panel have been established in which case the application shall be rejected.
  - b) That grounds for review have been established, in which case the Early/Late Stage Review Interview Panel shall be instructed by the Graduate School Committee to reconsider their decision in accordance with approved regulations and procedures.
  
184. The Early/Late Stage Review Interview Panel shall normally review their original decision as soon as possible after the meeting of the Research Degrees Review Panel, and normally not longer than two months after the meeting. The Registrar shall inform the candidate that the Panel has been asked to review their original decision. The Panel, after duly considering the information made available to them, shall agree either to amend or confirm their original decision.
  
185. Where the Early/Late Stage Review Interview Panel agrees to amend its decision, but are uncertain as to the most appropriate alternative recommendation, they may seek additional evidence of the candidate's performance through a further interview. The Panel's decision at the end of the process is final.

186. Where the Early/Late Stage Review Interview Panel reaffirm their original decision, the Review Panel shall re-convene.
187. The Research Degrees Review Panel shall normally re-convene as soon as possible after the meeting of the Early/Late Stage Review Interview Panel.
188. The Review Panel's decision shall be either:
  - a) to confirm the decision of the Early/Late Stage Review Interview Panel.
  - b) advise the Graduate School Committee that the candidate be re-examined by a different Early/Late Stage Review Interview Panel.
189. The Secretary of the Review Panel shall communicate to the candidate the recommendation of the Review Panel in writing, with reasons, within seven working days of the conclusion of the hearing.
190. The recommendation of the review Panel shall be received by the Graduate School Committee.
191. The recommendation of the Review Panel on the request for a review shall be final and there shall be no further right of review or appeal by the candidate.

#### **MEMBERSHIP OF THE RESEARCH DEGREES REVIEW PANEL**

192. The membership of the Research Degrees Review Panel shall be nominated by the Chair of the Academic Board and shall comprise:
  - a) A Dean (without responsibility for the School in which the programme of research was undertaken).
  - b) The Chair of the Graduate School Committee (or nominee).
  - c) An appropriate external person.
  - d) The Dean of the School in which the programme of research is being conducted. If the Dean is involved in the supervision or examination of the candidate, he/she should nominate a member of the School who has not been previously connected with the supervision or the examination of the candidate.
  - e) Two members of the Graduate School Committee with experience of supervising candidates to the successful completion of a research degree and examining research degrees candidates and who have had no previous involvement in the review, or with the supervision or the examination of the candidate.

- f) The Registrar, if not previously involved in an appeal at an earlier stage.

The Registrar shall nominate a member of staff to act as Secretary to the Panel.

## **REVIEW OF DECISIONS MADE BY EXAMINERS AFTER THE FINAL EXAMINATION**

### **General Principles**

- 193. The University recognises that following the final oral examination research degree candidates shall have the right to request a review of the examiners' recommendation. Given the existence of procedures to resolve complaints and grievances during the period of study, alleged inadequacy of supervisory or other arrangements before the submission of the thesis is not admissible grounds for requesting a review of the examination decision.
- 194. Requests for a review are therefore permitted **only** on the following grounds:
  - a) That there were medical or other circumstances affecting the candidate's performance, which he/she was unable to divulge before the final oral examination.
  - b) That there is evidence of procedural irregularity in the conduct of the examination (including administrative error) of such a nature as to cause doubt as to whether the result might have been different had the irregularity not occurred.
  - c) That there is evidence of unfair or improper assessment on the part of one or more of the examiners.

DISAGREEMENT WITH THE ACADEMIC JUDGEMENT OF THE EXAMINERS IN ASSESSING A STUDENT'S PERFORMANCE CANNOT IN ITSELF CONSTITUTE GROUNDS FOR A REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION BY THE CANDIDATE.

- 195. In the case of medical circumstances, a medical certificate will not be sufficient. A full medical report is required, the costs of which must be borne by the candidate. The report should include, where possible, the precise dates of illness and comment on the effect of the illness on the candidate on the date of and immediately prior to the examination.
- 196. In the case of procedural irregularity or of unfair or improper assessment, claims must be substantiated with evidence of the allegations made.

## **PROCEDURES FOR CONSIDERING REQUESTS FOR A REVIEW**

197. Candidates must give notice of their request for a review normally within one month from the date of notification of the result, against which the case is to be lodged, and must submit the case for review within a further three months from the date of giving notice. The Registrar, in consultation with the Chair of the Graduate School Committee (or nominee), shall determine whether late submissions will be considered.
198. Notice of a request for a review should be submitted in writing to the Registrar. The request must include:
- a) The candidate's full name, School and the title of the thesis.
  - b) Details of the examination decision, which has prompted the request for a review.
  - c) The names of the candidate's supervisors.
  - d) Full details of the grounds for the request with supporting evidence.
  - e) If these grounds relate to illness or other extenuating factors, full and valid reasons as to why this information was not made known to the examiners prior to the examination.
199. The Registrar shall acknowledge receipt of a request for a review of the decision of the examiners within seven working days.
200. The Registrar(or nominee), together with the Chair of the Graduate School Committee, shall make an assessment of the case to ascertain initially whether the request is based upon approved grounds as outlined in paragraphs 193 (a), (b) and (c). If the Chair of the Graduate School Committee was involved in the supervision or examination of the candidate, the Registrar shall nominate another member of the University's Graduate School Committee who has not been previously connected with the supervision or examination of the candidate. In making that assessment, the Registrar (or nominee) and the Chair of the Graduate School Committee (or nominee) may consult the examiners, the candidate's supervisors or other persons as appropriate and may request a copy of the examiner's preliminary and final reports, together with the thesis submitted by the candidate for examination. The assessment shall be concluded and the outcome communicated to the student within 25 working days of receipt of the request for a review.
201. Should the Registrar (or nominee) and the Chair of the Graduate School Committee (or nominee) establish that the request for a review is based upon approved grounds; the case must be dealt with according to the procedure in the following three sections. At this stage the Registrar shall inform the examiners that a request for a review has been made and told that it may be necessary to approach them on issues raised by the candidate. This procedure may involve reference to a Research Degrees Review Panel (paragraph 229).

202. If the Registrar (or nominee) and the Chair of the Graduate School Committee (or nominee) establish that the request for a review is not based upon approved grounds, then the candidate should receive a written explanation from the Registrar, which describes the reason or reasons why the request has been disallowed.

**A) PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH CASES BY CANDIDATES WHOSE PERFORMANCE WAS ALLEGEDLY AFFECTED BY ILLNESS OR OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES**

203. In a case where the candidate claims that his/her performance was adversely affected by illness or other circumstances, and, in the opinion of the Registrar (or nominee) and the Chair of the Graduate School Committee (or nominee), there appears to be no prima facie case for the decision of the examiners to be reviewed, the Registrar shall write to the candidate giving reasons why the request is not supported.

204. In cases where the candidate claims that his/her performance was adversely affected by illness or other circumstances, and, in the opinion of the Registrar in consultation with the Chair of the Graduate School Committee (or nominee), there appears to be a prima facie case for the decision of the examiners to be reviewed, the Registrar will advise the examiners that there are grounds to review their decision and will ask them to re-convene in order to review their decision. It will not be necessary for the Research Degrees Review Panel to meet.

205. The Registrar shall inform the candidate that the examiners have agreed to review their decision. The examiners, after considering the information presented to them, shall agree either to amend or to confirm their original decision.

206. Where the examiners agree to amend their decision, but are uncertain as to the most appropriate alternative recommendation, they may seek additional evidence of the candidate's performance through a further oral examination.

207. Where the examiners agree to confirm their decision, this will end the matter in cases based solely on medical circumstances.

**B) PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH CASES WHERE THERE IS EVIDENCE OF PROCEDURAL IRREGULARITY IN THE CONDUCT OF THE EXAMINATION**

208. The Research Degrees Review Panel will hear all such cases. Cases will be heard normally no longer than two months after a request for a review has been submitted by the candidate. The Registrar (or nominee) will arrange the meeting.

209. The Registrar shall provide the Research Degrees Review Panel with:

- a) The application for review with any supporting documentary evidence.
- b) The examiners' final report.
- c) The preliminary reports of the examiners.
- d) The regulations concerning the award of Research Degrees.
- e) Copies of any other written information considered relevant by the Registrar.

A copy of the candidate's thesis shall be made available to members of the Panel before and during the meeting of the Review Panel.

210. The candidate shall be invited to attend the meeting of the Research Degrees Review Panel and shall be informed of his/her right to be accompanied by a person of his/her choosing who can speak on his/her behalf. Should the candidate choose to be represented, the name, address and brief biographical details of the representative must be submitted in writing to the Registrar not less than seven days before the appointed date of the Review Panel.
211. The proceedings of the Review Panel shall remain confidential to members of the Panel and the Graduate School Committee.
- a) The candidate (or his/her representative) shall be asked to put his/her case in the presence of the Review Panel and to call such witnesses as s/he wishes.
  - b) The Review Panel will interview or receive a written response from at least one examiner with respect to the request for review.
  - c) The Review Panel shall have the authority to require the internal and external members of the supervision team and any member of the University staff connected with the candidate's programme of research to present an oral or written report on the case under review.
  - d) The Review Panel shall have the opportunity to ask questions of each witness called by the candidate. The candidate may agree to answer questions put by the Review Panel as s/he wishes.
  - e) The candidate (or his/her representative) shall have an opportunity to respond to any statement or report made by the examiners, supervisors or members of the University staff.
  - f) The candidate (or his/her representative) shall have the opportunity to sum up their case if s/he so wishes.

212. The Review Panel may recommend:

- a) That no grounds for a review of the examiners' decision have been established in which case the application shall be rejected.
  - b) That grounds for review have been established, in which case the examiners shall be instructed by the Graduate School Committee to reconsider their decision in accordance with approved regulations and procedures.
213. The examiners shall normally review their original decision as soon as possible after the meeting of the Research Degrees Review Panel, and normally not longer than two months after the meeting. The Registrar shall inform the candidate that the examiners have been asked to review their original decision. The examiners, after duly considering the information made available to them, shall agree either to amend or confirm their original decision.
214. Where the examiners agree to amend their decision, but are uncertain as to the most appropriate alternative recommendation, they may seek additional evidence of the candidate's performance through a second oral examination.
215. The examiner's decision will be final and there shall be no further right of a request for a review by the candidate.

**C) PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH CASES WHERE THERE IS EVIDENCE OF UNFAIR OR IMPROPER ASSESSMENT ON THE PART OF ONE OR MORE EXAMINERS**

216. The Research Degrees Review Panel will hear all such cases. Cases will be heard normally no longer than two months after a request for a review has been submitted by the candidate. The Registrar (or nominee) will arrange the meeting.
217. The Registrar shall provide the Research Degrees Review Panel with:
- a) The application for review with any supporting documentary evidence.
  - b) The examiners' final report.
  - c) The preliminary reports of the examiners.
  - d) The regulations concerning the award of Research Degrees.
  - e) Copies of any other written information considered relevant by the Registrar.

A copy of the candidate's thesis shall be made available to members of the Panel before and during the meeting of the Review Panel.

218. The candidate shall be invited to attend the meeting of the Research Degrees Review Panel and shall be informed of his/her right to be accompanied by a

person of his/her choosing who can speak on his/her behalf. Should the candidate opt to be represented, the name, address and brief biographical details of the representative must be submitted in writing to the Registrar not less than seven days before the appointed date of the Review Panel.

219. The proceedings of the Review Panel shall remain confidential to members of the Panel and the Graduate School Committee.
- a) The candidate (or his/her representative) shall be asked to put his/her case in the presence of the Review Panel and to call such witnesses as he/she wishes.
  - b) The Review Panel will interview or receive a written response from at least one examiner with respect to the request for review.
  - c) The Review Panel shall have the authority to require the internal and external members of the supervision team and any member of the University staff connected with the candidate's programme of research to present an oral or written report on the case under review.
  - d) The Review Panel shall have the opportunity to ask questions of each witness called by the candidate. The candidate may agree to answer questions put by the Review Panel if he/she wishes.
  - e) The candidate (or his/her representative) shall have an opportunity to respond to any statement or report made by the examiners, supervisors or members of the University staff.
  - f) The candidate (or his/her representative) shall have the opportunity to sum up their case if he/she so wishes.
220. The Review Panel may recommend:
- a) That no grounds for a review of the examiners' decision have been established in which case the application shall be rejected.
  - b) That grounds for review have been established, in which case the examiners shall be instructed by the Graduate School Committee to reconsider their decision in accordance with approved regulations and procedures.
221. The examiners shall normally review their original decision as soon as possible after the meeting of the Research Degrees Review Panel, and normally not longer than two months after the meeting. The Registrar shall inform the candidate that the examiners have been asked to review their original decision. The examiners, after duly considering the information made available to them, shall agree either to amend or confirm their original decision.
222. Where the examiners agree to amend their decision, but are uncertain as to the most appropriate alternative recommendation, they may seek additional

evidence of the candidate's performance through a second oral examination. The examiners' decision at the end of the process is final.

223. Where the examiners reaffirm their original decision, the Review Panel shall re-convene.
224. The Research Degrees Review Panel shall normally re-convene as soon as possible after the meeting of the examiners.
225. The Review Panel's decision shall be either:
  - a) to confirm the decision of the examiners.
  - b) advise the Graduate School Committee that the candidate be re-examined by different examiners on the thesis as originally submitted.
226. The Review Panel shall not have the authority to recommend the award of the degree.
227. The Secretary of the Review Panel shall communicate to the candidate the recommendation of the Review Panel in writing, with reasons, within seven working days of the conclusion of the hearing.
228. The recommendation of the review Panel shall be received by the Graduate School Committee.
229. The recommendation of the Review Panel on the request for a review shall be final and there shall be no further right of review or appeal by the candidate.

#### **MEMBERSHIP OF THE RESEARCH DEGREES REVIEW PANEL**

230. The membership of the Research Degrees Review Panel shall be nominated by the Chair of the Academic Board and shall comprise:
  - a) A Dean (without responsibility for the School in which the programme of research was undertaken).
  - b) The Chair of the Graduate School Committee (or nominee).
  - c) An appropriate external person.
  - d) The Dean of the School in which the programme of research is being conducted. If the Dean is involved in the supervision or examination of the candidate, he/she should nominate a member of the School who has not been previously connected with the supervision or the examination of the candidate.
  - e) Two members of the Graduate School Committee with experience of supervising candidates to the successful completion of a research

degree and examining research degrees candidates and who have had no previous involvement in the review, or with the supervision or the examination of the candidate.

- g) The Registrar, if not previously involved in an appeal at an earlier stage.

The Registrar shall nominate a member of staff to act as Secretary to the Panel.

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**Disabled students**

If, due to a disability, you need us to make adjustments in order that you can attend an interview or hearing, please let us know in advance and we will aim to meet your individual requirements. This could mean us relocating the hearing to a more accessible venue and/or making arrangements for a communicator or advocate to be present at the hearing

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**Staffordshire University’s commitment to equality and diversity means that this policy has been screened in relation to the use of gender-neutral language, jargon-free plain English, recognition of the needs of disabled people, promotion of the positive duty in relation to race and disability and avoidance of stereotypes. This document is available in alternative formats on request. If you think we can improve the fairness of this policy, please contact the individual who has responsibility for its update.**

## Appendix A – Format of Thesis

The following requirements shall be adhered to in the format of the submitted thesis for examination:

- a Theses shall normally be in A4 format; the Graduate School Committee may give permission for a thesis to be submitted in another format where it is satisfied that the contents of the thesis can be better expressed in that format; a candidate using a format larger than A4 should note that the production of microfiche copies and full-size enlargements may not be feasible;
- b Copies of the thesis shall be presented in a permanent and legible form either in typescript or print; where copies are produced by photocopying processes, these shall be of a permanent nature; where word processor and printing devices are used, the printer shall be capable of producing text of a satisfactory quality; the size of character used in the main text, including displayed matter and notes, shall not be less than 2.0 mm for capitals and 1.5 mm for x-height (that is, the height of lower-case x);
- c The thesis may be printed on both sides of the paper, which shall be white and within the range 70 g/m<sup>2</sup> to 100 g/m<sup>2</sup>;
- d The margin at the left-hand binding edge of the page shall not be less than 40 mm; other margins shall not be less than 15 mm;
- e Double or one-and-a-half line spacing shall be used in the typescript except for indented quotations or footnotes where single spacing may be used;
- f Pages shall be numbered consecutively through the main text including photographs and/or diagrams included as whole pages;
- g The title page shall give the following information:
  - 1 the full title of the thesis;
  - 2 the full name of the author;
  - 3 that the degree is awarded by the University;
  - 4 the award for which the degree is submitted in partial fulfilment of its requirements;
  - 5 the Collaborating Establishment(s)/Validated Partner Institution, if any; and
  - 6 the month and year of submission.