



Postgraduate Research Programmes Code of Practice

Staffordshire University Postgraduate Research Programmes Code of Practice

Revised 2021

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1. Introduction

Staffordshire University's Code of Practice sets out the University's expectations of quality and standards in relation to the range of activities associated with Postgraduate Research (PGR) provision. For the purposes of this document, Postgraduate Research Provision includes:

- The research element of Professional Doctorate programmes, excluding the DClinPsy but including the whole of the PD Health Psychology at Level 8
- Programmes leading to the award of MPhil
- Programmes leading to the award PhD

The University's PGR provision is set out in the University's PGR Regulations and stipulates a set of definitions, procedures, and responsibilities in general terms. The purpose of this Code of Practice (COP) is a supplement to these regulations. It sets out the responsibilities of the University, Schools, supervisors and students with respect to the PGR provision, *where those are not already clear in the regulations*, alongside the high standards it expects to be met throughout this provision. The COP also specifies the content of a School-level PGR handbook (see School PGR Handbook below) which will be made available to students.

The description of these responsibilities and standards draws upon good practice and regulatory frameworks both nationally and internationally. Throughout, this COP is benchmarked against chapter B11 of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

Staffordshire University is currently operating three sets of core PGR regulations:

1. For students who began their studies prior to September 2015
2. For students who began their studies between September 2015 and September 2019
3. For students who began their studies during or after September 2019....

In addition, a parallel set of regulations covers the PhD by Published Work.

These sets of regulations can all be found on the Graduate School pages on IRIS, at <https://iris.staffs.ac.uk/Interact/Pages/Section/ContentListing.aspx?subsection=8469>. A University login is required to access them, so if you do not have one please email graduateschool@staffs.ac.uk for an electronic copy

Rules and procedures that apply to all students at the University (not just PGR students) can be found at <https://www.staffs.ac.uk/students/course-administration/academic-policies-and-regulations>.

2. Principles

The provision of PGR programmes means the training of new, professional researchers of the highest quality and integrity, capable of contributing to knowledge in their discipline, and of having an impact beyond it. This provision thus sits partly within the research mission of the University (<https://www.staffs.ac.uk/research/docs/pdf/code-of-practice-for-research.pdf>), and partly within its degree awarding powers. The following principles guide the University's PGR provision:

- a. Excellence in research should be supported and enhanced. This means the provision of an appropriate research environment and culture, of research and professional training, of sufficient resources of the appropriate type, providing social and welfare support for students, and ensuring the transparency and accountability of institutional

communications and procedures

- b. All those involved in the research degree process should be treated in a professional, collegiate and supportive manner;
- c. Excellent research must be conducted with intellectual honesty, within closely watched ethical boundaries, within a legal framework both national and international, and ensuring the health and safety of all participants.

The manner in which these principles will be actualised is described in the sections that follow.

3. Recruitment

The recruitment of PGR students involves three stages: promotion, application and selection.

The promotion or marketing of PGR opportunities will be such as to accurately represent the terms of any offer that might be made, the facilities or resources available, and the prospects of graduates. PGR opportunities will only be promoted and offered in academic areas where an appropriate research environment is in place (please refer to Section 6 'The Research Environment' below).

The application process will be conducted as per the appropriate set of regulations. Any application from September 2019 will be / have been processed under the following regulations: <https://www.staffs.ac.uk/students/course-administration/academic-policies-and-regulations/postgraduate-research-regulations>.

These paragraphs cover the minimum standards, a procedure for assessing applications, interviewing candidates and making decisions, and the responsibilities for decision-making.

At interview, the same principles of the accurate representation of the degree course, available resources etc., must be adhered to. Prospective students should also be made aware of their responsibilities, should they be accepted (See 'Supervision', 'Student's Responsibilities' and 'External Organisations' below).

For Professional Doctorate applicants, selection will take place according to course regulations and criteria. Since admission is usually initially to the taught stage of the programme, it falls outside the scope of this Code of Practice.

For MPhil/PhD applicants, the principles underlying the selection of an applicant are:

- a. The selection of successful applicants will be equitable (<https://www.staffs.ac.uk/students/support/equality-diversity-inclusion>).
- b. Selection will be based upon the merits of the applicant and his or her research proposal. A candidate will be assessed on the following: personal or professional experience and qualifications; existing knowledge and skills (including English language); capacity for high level independent thinking in the relevant academic field; ability to work in a collegiate manner with supervisors and other researchers; ability to cope with the demands of planning, organising, pursuing and completing a large-scale research project and associated written thesis or other artefacts of the appropriate scale, depth and originality.
- c. Selection will be dependent upon the availability of a suitable supervisor who is both qualified and research active in the area. Likewise, acceptance will demand a scrutiny of the availability of other research resources (library, IT, studios, lab equipment, external partners, etc.), including funding, required for the proposed

project.

- d. Selection may be guided by the University or School's strategy, which may involve the promotion of certain research topics or units.

When an offer is made, an offer letter will be generated, which will include the following information:

- i. details of the exact programme/route for which the student has been accepted;
- ii. theme/topic of the research project ;
- iii. initial supervision arrangements;
- iv. the proposed start date;
- v. all relevant financial matters (including tuition fees, bench fees, and any other relevant costs);
- vi. the date by which the candidate should confirm (or otherwise) acceptance of the offer;
- vii. arrangements for enrolment, registration and induction;
- viii. opportunities to take up teaching, or other duties, associated with the offer;
- ix. links to the research degree regulations and code of practice;
- x. links to any sources of funding for which the candidate may be entitled;
- xi. practical information concerning travel, accommodation or finance;
- xii. any other relevant conditions attached to the offer: for example, conditions attached by a sponsor, agreement to undertake specific training, submission of progress reports, attendance at the University and contact with supervisors, the involvement of external collaborating parties, English language requirements or any financial guarantees required.

4. Induction

The induction of newly enrolled and registered research students will serve not only to supply essential information, but to welcome new students into the research environment. Each School will provide an induction programme, mandatory for all its new students. This may be designed and delivered at Departmental or Course level rather than as a single induction across the whole School, but the School PGR Leads will have oversight of the process.

The programme will normally be offered within three weeks of the date of registration. The induction programme will cover at minimum the following:

- a. provision of the School (or Department or Course) Handbook;
- b. important contact names and details in the School, including all those involved in management of research, PGR Leads, research ethics and School-level complaints and appeals procedures;
- c. resources and facilities within the School, and how to access them (including where appropriate, the training, or health and safety procedures associated with them);
- d. relevant specialist resources and facilities held outside the School, especially the library (physical and digital) as a research tool, and IT services.
- e. academic/pastoral support available within the School with contact details;
- f. availability of funding and application procedure, within the School, for conference attendance, research consumables, and related expenses;

- g. the schedule of School-level events for the succeeding few months, and in general other opportunities for networking with researchers;
- h. arrangements for the School's arrangements for PGR representation and feedback, and who the current PGR representatives are;
- i. information about where to find regulations, code of practice, guidance notes, and forms. Key University-level contacts;
- j. meetings with the full supervisory team to (i) agree the specific roles and responsibilities of the supervisory relationship, and agree a timetable of meetings; (ii) perform an initial skills appraisal (the Vitae RDF tool is recommended for this), and develop a provisional development plan; (iii) develop an outline plan of work for at least the first few months of the research; and (iv) finally, develop a schedule working towards the progress reviews outlined in the regulations. This work will likely take more than one meeting, and some of the above tasks will likely benefit from the Graduate School induction described below.

In addition, the Graduate School will provide an induction workshop, mandatory for all new research students University-wide. It will be offered three times each academic year, and be scheduled in such a way as to follow closely on from the School-level induction. It will also be available as a distance-learning package for those unable to attend in person. The Graduate School's induction workshop will cover the following topics:

- a. introduction to PGR regulations; key moments, procedures and dates;
- b. introduction to: the ethical approval process; issues of data protection and storage; intellectual property; health and safety; research integrity; and plagiarism.
- c. good practice within the supervisory relationship;
- d. the principles of reflective skills appraisals using the Vitae RDF, for personal and professional development;
- e. the schedule of university-wide research training opportunities;
- f. the principles and standards of doctoral level research (definitions of research and the research process; literature review; methodological models and choices);
- g. overview of Progress Review stages, including implications of their possible outcomes;
- h. the criteria to be used for making decisions about the extension, suspension or termination of a research student's registration;
- i. the circumstances in which research student appeal mechanisms may be used and how to use them.
- j. University and Student Union services for welfare and support.

For both induction programmes, students on distance learning routes, or international students who are unable to be present for one or the other workshops, must be supplied in a timely manner with equivalent material in either paper or electronic form. Equivalent supervisor meetings should be held as soon as possible, and should include a review of all the above topics so that the research student is aware of them and is provided with necessary contact details if further information is required.

These induction workshops are only the first stage in a research student's research, and personal and professional development. Please see 'Research Environment' and 'Research and Professional Training' below.

5. School PGR Handbook

Each School will provide new students at induction with a handbook. The main purpose of this handbook is to reinforce information introduced in induction, and be a supplement to the University-level PGR regulations and the COP, giving School-specific information on personnel, procedures, resources, etc. A template for this handbook is distributed to Schools, and contains:

- a. an introduction from Dean or representative.
- b. an outline of School structures and personnel for both the management of research, research ethics, and of PGR programmes.
- c. an outline of the School's research portfolio, including research centres or institutes.
- d. arrangements for the School's arrangement for PGR representation, and other mechanisms for student feedback;
information about the availability and use of School resources, equipment, software, research services, work spaces, etc.; this is to include health and safety information, procedures for access and the availability of relevant training. Likewise, information about specialist library and IT resources should be provided.
- e. availability of funding and application procedure for conference attendance, research consumables, and related expenses;
- f. channels of communication and how they will be used; where to find School-level information (seminars, workshops, etc.);
- g. complaints and appeals processes within the School;
- h. Information about the role of the Graduate School, and about where to find regulations, code of practice, guidance notes, and forms. Key University-level contacts;

6. Research Environment

It is vital that the research environment provides a suitable context for the conduct of research and is capable of supporting the range of students being recruited. We hold that the research, advanced scholarship and enterprise environment maintained for staff is coextensive and mutually supportive of the environment offered to research students. As indicated above in 'Recruitment', the University will only offer research degree opportunities in subject areas that have an appropriate environment. Minimum conditions for a subject area constituting such an environment are:

- a. The subject area will include researchers actively producing work judged excellent in the area (on the basis of REF results, prizes, or journal ratings, etc.), and/or successful in achieving research grant income, or equivalent activity (consultancy research, for example);
- b. It will contain researchers who also have capacity and qualifications to supervise. Normally, the qualifications are a degree at level 8, and either previous supervisory experience or completion of the Graduate Schools supervisor training programme. In terms of capacity: the University's workloading policy specifies a number of hours for supervision and this must be taken account of when determining capacity. In addition, a supervisor who is primary supervisor to seven full-time students, or ten part-time

students, or on the supervisory team for fourteen students, whether primary or secondary, and whether part time or full, must provide a note of support to the Graduate School Committee from his or her School, as well as specific justification of their additional supervisory capacity, before accepting new students.

- c. It will be able to offer the facilities and resources in place to pursue research, and learn about research. These will include relevant specialist spaces, texts or instrumentation, as well as office space with a computer (this may be hot-desking).
- d. The subject area, School and University will provide
 - a programme of induction for new students (see 'Induction' above);
 - a set of research-oriented training opportunities (e.g. in project management, research methods, specific training in pieces of software, equipment or techniques, etc.); as well as additional training concerning ethical conduct in research, career and employment skills (e.g. presenting at conferences; writing papers for publication; teaching training, etc.), and Intellectual Property and commercial exploitation. (Please see the section 'Research and Professional Training');
 - a broader programme of conferences, speakers, seminars, exhibitions and other such events – both internal and involving external individuals or organisations – in order to bring researchers together in a collegiate atmosphere, expose students to researchers working in other areas, and allow them to forge peer and professional networks.

The wider environment will also include:

- e. funding available to research students for development activities, such as conference attendance (see School PGR Handbooks);
- f. provision for the health and welfare support of students (see section below);
- g. a clear complaints and appeals procedure (see section below);
- h. regular mechanisms for gathering feedback from students (see section below);
- i. regular progression checks (see sections below).

7. Social and Welfare Services

In general, the research student's supervisory team will offer pastoral advice, although in many cases this will consist primarily of guiding the student to one of the School's guidance counsellors (<https://www.staffs.ac.uk/students/support/student-guidance>) and/or to one of the internal or external support teams listed at the following link:
<https://www.staffs.ac.uk/students/support/student-inclusion-team/home>.

All submission guidelines for PGR theses/portfolios (e.g. format, font size, etc.) may be modified where necessary under the University's equality duties and/or if recommended by an individual student's Learner Support Agreement. Similarly, the research student's supervisor should liaise with the appropriate department to ensure arrangements for review stages and examination are suitable to the student's needs, as per a Learner Support Agreement.

8. The Management of PGR programmes by School and University

The management of PGR programmes is stipulated in the regulations available at <https://iris.staffs.ac.uk/Interact/Pages/Section/ContentListing.aspx?subsection=8469>

The key body responsible for this management is the Graduate School Committee (GSC), chaired by the Head of the Graduate School. This Committee is in turn a sub-committee of the University's Research and Innovation Committee.

The principal responsibilities with respect to PGR governance are as follows.

Schools:

- a. Schools will assist Marketing and the Graduate School by regularly reviewing and keeping up to date marketing materials. After release by Admissions, it is colleagues in the School who review applications, arrange interviews, and propose acceptance.
- b. Schools will provide part of the induction offering, and will create and maintain a School PGR Handbook.
- c. Schools will aid the Graduate School in monitoring the progress of research degree students.
- d. Schools are responsible for ensuring that on-campus students have a place to work and are both aware of and can access those facilities needed to support their programmes of work.
- e. Schools will ensure the current research activity, and professional development, of supervisory staff in the School. This will normally include experienced supervisors attending at least one professional development session per year, of relevance to their supervisory duties.
- f. Schools should play a role in providing a research environment for both staff and students. As necessary, and in liaison with the Graduate School, Schools should make a programme of discipline-specific research and professional training available to students.
- g. Schools will produce an annual monitoring report on their PGR provision.

The University / Graduate School:

- a. The Graduate School will coordinate, publicise and monitor the effectiveness and revise as needed, an annual programme of research development events.
- b. The Graduate School will write the University annual monitoring report on PGRs, based upon School reports, and this overall report will be presented for discussion and action at the Graduate School Committee before being presented for approval at the University Academic Board.
- c. Via the Graduate School Committee and Research and Innovation Committee the Head of the Graduate School has a key role in linking the research degree provision to the research activity of the University and has an overarching view of all the postgraduate research provision at the University, including monitoring student progress records.
- d. The Graduate School Committee is responsible for approval of key documents in the PGR journey (as specified in the regulations) and for general oversight of the quality and integrity of the process.

- e. The Graduate School Committee will ensure that the University's PGR Regulations and procedures are observed and will promote good practice in the induction, supervision, assessment and training of research degree students.
- f. In addition, the Graduate School Committee will oversee the processes that have been put in place to monitor the progress and performance of research students.
- g. The Graduate School Committee has the authority to award degrees to those PGR students who have passed through their examination, or to withdraw research students who have failed to make adequate progress in their studies.

The above list is not intended to be a full list of all the duties that each area must carry out – these are specified in full in the regulations and guidance notes.

9. Research and Professional Training

In addition to the programmes for induction discussed above and events contributing to the broad research culture of the University (see 'The Research Environment'), a programme of research and professional training – 'The Researcher Development Programme' - will be provided. The aim of this is to ensure a high level of research, professional, generic and careers skills among the postgraduate research population, and develop a research community that includes all research colleagues.

Some of these workshops will be offered by the Graduate School or other Services directly, others (especially those that offer more specialised training) will be offered by Schools but – in coordination with the Graduate School – workshops will be open to all research degree students and staff University-wide, where appropriate. A programme for the year, for all such activities offered University-wide, will be maintained by the Graduate School. Importantly, 'development opportunity' does not refer only to formal training workshops offered by School or University, but to any discrete event or series of events that (i) demonstrably serve to enhance relevant skills, or provide relevant experience and (ii) result in reflection upon that experience as to what was learned and its value. So, for example, attendance at an external conference or training workshop, organising/curating an exhibition, acquiring additional teaching experience, language tuition, giving a first paper, or preparing a first paper for publication, could all be counted.

The School or Service that offers the opportunities will track student attendance and participant feedback, and will feed these back to the Graduate School who will use the information to inform the annual monitoring process. The programme of training will be reviewed annually by the Graduate School as to its suitability, range and strategy of provision.

Students with their supervisors will perform *at least annually* a skills assessment, for which the VITAE RDF is recommended as an enabling tool. At minimum, this will be reported on in the annual progression. This assessment will determine for the year ahead a provisional schedule of the student's attendance at relevant workshops. Research, professional or related training opportunities undertaken during the year should be reported and commented on by the student in the formal review stages as appropriate. Adequate pursuit of development is a requirement of progression.

The annual programme of training provided will likely include sessions on:

- a. Advanced level or specialised research strategies, methods or techniques; introduction to new research in an area; newly available techniques, equipment or resources;
- b. Interdisciplinary or comparative research workshops and presentations;
- c. Practical skills of research project management (e.g. using referencing software;

- project management skills);
- d. Intellectual Property and commercial exploitation;
 - e. Networking, publishing, conferencing; making use of external opportunities (e.g. Erasmus).
 - f. Careers development (e.g. the PhD and your CV, the academic job market, interview guidance, teaching training workshops, useful tools from Vitae and others);
 - g. Ethical research, research integrity;
 - h. Health and safety with respect to specific equipment, environments, etc.
 - i. Research degree procedures related workshops (e.g. guidance on early or late stage review, writing up strategies, preparing for your viva).
 - j. Generic skills, e.g. academic writing, report writing, presentation skills, computing skills, etc.

10. Supervision

The roles and qualifications of supervisors are specified in the PGR regulations (please refer to the regulations appropriate to you) and in section 6(b) above. The responsibilities of supervisors include:

- (a) Before enrolment: Play a key role in liaising with potential candidates, evaluating applications, interviews, and assembling the School Recommendation for Acceptance form.
- (b) After enrolment, as part of induction. Ensure the student acquires familiarity with:
 - Names, roles and contact details of each member of the supervisory team and the relevant PGR Lead
 - Details and requirements of the sponsor or bursary, if any; requirements for international students of their study visa; regulations and requirements of the degree programme, including review and progression stages, ethics approval (and research probity in general), and annual re-enrolment.
 - the research environment in Department, School and University; the facilities available and how to access them (including requisite training); standard research-level resources and guidelines available outside the University (e.g. Research Council publications, VITAE, professional organisations, etc.);
 - professional development opportunities available; the range of help and support available to students within the University;
- (c) Professional and ethical working relations:
 - Have regular, quality, meetings that are documented and recorded in the required manner; set clear roles and communications; provide a supportive but suitably demanding atmosphere; always being clear as to the ownership of the research.
 - Discuss and encourage throughout professional and career development; and any opportunities for student representation or feedback.
 - Maintain your own professional capacity, both through continuing research and

scholarship in the subject area, and through professional development of the knowledge and skills relevant to supervision

(d) Guiding research:

- Develop with the student, and regularly discuss throughout, the student's research plans and his or her progress towards them.
- Supply timely feedback and guidance as the research develops, up to and including the writing up and examination stage (e.g. mock viva).

(e) The supervisory team will initiate, or at least ensure the timely completion of, many of the checks required by the University. For example:

- Supervisory record form for each meeting; annual progress review.
- Ethical approval process; intellectual property; health and safety risk assessments.
- Arrange progression reviews (in conjunction with the Graduate School where specified in programme outlines, and help student to prepare for these;
- propose examination arrangements to Graduate School;
- prepare and submit other such documents as required (e.g. request for extension or change of study mode, annual leave);
- and in general, help the School representative and the Graduate School to keep accurate records of the student and his or her progress.

Full time PGR students should normally undertake formal supervision sessions with their Principal Supervisor at least once a month (every 2 months for part time students). For students in attendance, these meetings should normally take place face-to-face, although meetings between these times may be held electronically. For Distance Learning students, the sessions can be held using an online video calling platform such as Teams or an alternative method of communication. Discussions and outcomes from these sessions must be documented on the Student/Supervisor Meeting Record Form. Copies of the completed forms should be held by the student and supervisor and also emailed to this address:

pgrmeetingrecords@staffs.ac.uk

The effectiveness of the University's supervisors is monitored and ensured by:

- a. Research student feedback (see 'The Student Voice' below);
- b. The timeliness of students' progression and their success at examination (these data are collected through annual monitoring reports and through the data held by the Graduate School);
- c. The Supervisor's line manager, and/or the School's Associate Dean for Scholarship, Enterprise & Research will be known to the student, and are the first port of call for an issue with supervision that cannot be solved within the supervisory team;

Schools will seek to ensure that supervisors attend some relevant form of supervisory development training on at least an annual basis.

11. The Student's Responsibilities

Research students are responsible for:

- a. their own personal and professional development, including, where possible, recognising when they need help and seeking it in a timely manner;

- b. maintaining regular contact with supervisors; preparing adequately for meetings with supervisors, and generally preparing an agenda for the meeting; keeping notes from meetings, in particular action points, and agreeing the wording of these with the supervisor(s);
- c. being aware of the work, attendance, financial, Visa and other technical requirements of progression: e.g. what is meant by full or part-time study, or how often an attendance student should meet his or her supervisor;
- d. setting and keeping to timetables and deadlines, including planning and submitting work as and when required and generally maintaining satisfactory progress with the programme of research;
- e. maintaining research records in such a way that they can be accessed and understood by anyone with a legitimate need to see them;
- f. raising awareness of any specific needs or circumstances likely to affect their work;
- g. attending any development opportunities (research-related or other) that have been identified when agreeing their development needs with their supervisors;
- h. being proactive in identifying and pursuing opportunities to present or publish research work; identifying and acknowledging supervisors and the University in any such outputs;
- i. completing required monitoring and progression documents in a timely manner;
- j. speaking with supervisors about and obtaining approval for annual leave (see below);
- k. conducting their work to the highest ethical standards, and standards of intellectual integrity (e.g. avoiding anything that could be construed as plagiarism, the fabrication of data, deliberate misinterpretation of data or source materials, mishandling of confidential or sensitive information, or theft of intellectual property). Students must also ensure that permission has been obtained before including any third party copyrighted material in the online version of the thesis.
- l. being familiar with the regulations, policies and professional guidelines that affect them, including those relating to their qualification, health and safety, intellectual property, data protection and storage, electronic repositories, and ethical research.

The University's PGR student annual leave policy applies to all PGR students carrying out research under the auspices of Staffordshire University and is available at the following link: <https://iris.staffs.ac.uk/Interact/Pages/Content/Document.aspx?id=8790&SearchId=0>.

12. Research Ethics, Research Integrity, Health and Safety

The University's research ethics policy and procedures are detailed here: <https://www.staffs.ac.uk/research/work-with-us/research-governance/ethics>.

Specifically, this page includes links to

- a. the Ethical Review Policy,
- b. the Code of Conduct for Research and Enterprise,

These should be supplemented by the general policy on academic misconduct, which applies to all students (not just research students), and is found here: <https://www.staffs.ac.uk/students/course-administration/academic-policies-and-regulations/academic-conduct-procedure>.

13. External Organisations

The PGR Regulations include guidance on the approval of and management of relations with external organisations that cooperate in the provision of research degrees.

14. Employment

In accordance with national regulations, full-time study is normally defined as 37 hours per week spent on the central activities of an PGR programme, or related activities (the latter could include required teaching, professional development, field work, travel, etc.). Part-time is variable, but should not normally be less than ten hours per week (averaged over a full year), nor more than 20.

The following employment policy applies to all PGR students studying at Staffordshire University on a Tier 4 visa:

<https://iris.staffs.ac.uk/Interact/Pages/Content/Document.aspx?id=8848&SearchId=0>.

15. The Monitoring of Progress

The key principles behind the University's monitoring of PGR students' progress are:

1. The University should provide all students with timely support in their degree, personal and professional development, or related life circumstances;
2. The University should reassure itself at regular intervals of the appropriateness and viability of a research students' work.
3. The University should monitor, evaluate and improve all aspects of its own PGR provision against the standards it sets itself in this COP and elsewhere.

Maternity and Paternity: To accord with equality legislation, students who require maternity or paternity leave during their studies will be enabled to do so, without penalty either in the form of tuition fee payments or to the maximum registration period for their award. The student's registration will be suspended for the period. Scholarship or bursary arrangements offered by School or University will have a clear policy on support of candidates, regarding the scholarship or bursary arrangements over the period of maternity/paternity leave. All of the above principles however may be superseded by UK Visa and Immigration rules, where they apply.

Research Students' progress is monitored through three principal mechanisms: 1. supervisory records feeding into a central database of information; 2. Annual progress review; and 3. formal progression and examination stages.

All PGR students have formal review and progression stages throughout their studies. Please refer to the appropriate set of regulations for further information.

16. Quality Assurance and the Student Voice

The University should monitor, evaluate and improve all aspects of its own PGR provision against the standards it sets itself in this COP and elsewhere.

Quality Assurance of PGR provision has a number of elements:

- a. The School has oversight of the activities of its students and supervisors and writes an annual monitoring report of its provision which is then seen by the Graduate School Committee; the GSC has oversight of the work of the Schools and of the Graduate School.
- b. The student voice is fed into quality assurance by way of: (i) progress review (ii) clear opportunities to provide confidential feedback directly within the School and to the chair of the Graduate School; (iii) representation of PGR students on the Graduate School Steering Group; (iv) a School-level student representation group, which will meet at least once per year, and notes from which are presented at the School Academic committee – and which will also receive and discuss a report on issues

raised and actions agreed from the previous year's annual monitoring reports; (v) PRES results, which will be discussed and acted upon at both School and University levels.

- c. The University's overall PGR provision is subject to the same 5-year cycle of reviews as other courses.
- d. Any subject area currently supervising students at doctoral level will be assumed to be providing the minimum research environment specified above and thus are entitled to recruit new students. The School annual monitoring and the University 5-year review cycle, are moments where this entitlement is reviewed and, potentially, withdrawn.

More specifically, the annual monitoring reports (both School and University) will provide data on, comment on, and propose a set of actions pertaining to:

- e. submission and completion times and rates, with account taken of any variations
- f. pass, referral and fail rates at the various review stages, and at the final exams.
- g. withdrawal rates
- h. the number of appeals and complaints, the reasons for them, and how many are upheld
- i. comments from examiners
- j. recruitment profiles
- k. feedback from research students (as individuals, by way of annual reviews and reports; and collectively, by way of the School's PGR liaison group and the PRES)
- l. feedback from employers, sponsors and other external partners
- m. various training or development opportunities organised at School level, their content, attendance and feedback,
- n. Changes to the School's supervisory profile or other aspects of its provision (i.e. loss of staff, new areas opening up, new partnerships and facilities available)
- o. information on subsequent employment destinations and career paths of research students who have achieved the qualification
- p. Awareness of and the University's compliance with its own regulations and COP
- q. System-wide issues that may be affecting student's progress or satisfaction (e.g. the availability of various types of resources, training or support).

17. Examination

The final assessment stage of the research degree is by an oral examination. The procedures, standards and possible outcomes are described in full in the regulations. These are designed to ensure that the process is carried out with equity and probity. It is the supervisor's responsibility to inform the research student about the nature of the examination, its possible outcomes, and to prepare the student for the event.

Examinations are chaired by an experienced member of the research and supervisory staff, selected from a list approved by the Graduate School Committee. The chair will not be in the same Department as the student, and must not have any connection with the project that would impede independence. Training for new examination chairs will be offered by the Graduate School as part of its programme of development.