Code of practice for research degrees

Academic year 2026/27

Contents

Scope, aims and objectives 1
Administrative and managerial arrangements for research students 1
Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Executive Dean of Faculty 1
Annual review of postgraduate research degree provision 2
Promotional information 2
Student files 2
Appointment and responsibilities of research supervisors 2
Appointment of supervisors 2
Supervisor training 2
Principal supervisor 3
Eligibility 3
Appointment 3
Changes to supervision 3
Responsibilities 4
Co-supervisor 5
Eligibility and appointment 5
Responsibilities 5
Collaborative supervisor 6
Responsibilities 6
Admission and initial registration 7
Ethics and data retention 8
Ethical considerations 8
Student information and induction 8
Handbooks 8
Induction 8
Academic misconduct and plagiarism 9
Fitness to practise and support for study 9
Responsibilities of students 9
To themselves 9
To their supervisors 9
To others 10
Development of research students 10
Teaching activities 11
Monitoring of student progress 11
Supervisory meetings 11
Review meetings and reports 11
Unsatisfactory progress 12

Feedback....12
Guidance to students experiencing issues or problems....12
The confirmation process....12
Preparation of the thesis....13
Supervision during preparation of thesis....13
Format of thesis....13
Submission of thesis/portfolio....13
Early submission of thesis....14
The final examination....14
Nature of examination....14
Viva voce panel....14
Guidance on the authorship of publications and other outputs originating from doctoral research....14
Complaints procedures....15
Appeals procedures....15

Scope, aims and objectives

1. This *Code* sets out the University of Surrey's policy and procedural framework relating to research degrees (MPhil, PhD, DBA, EngD, MD, PsychD, DClinPrac) and should be read in conjunction with the *Regulations for research degrees* and handbooks.

2. The aims of this *Code* are:

   - To ensure that research students at the University of Surrey are effectively supervised so that the full potential of their research ability may be achieved, and their research completed within the specified time period.
   - To ensure that students and staff have a common understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities.
   - To promote policies and procedures which protect the academic standards of the University's research degrees.

3. The objective of this *Code* is to define a set of standard procedures and specific responsibilities covering the academic supervision, administration, and assessment of research degrees for all Faculties within the University. Additional information about Faculty-specific information will be set out in programme handbooks.

4. This *Code* has been informed by a number of external advisory bodies, and is designed to be consonant with:

   - UK *Quality Code for Higher Education*
   - Doctoral degree characteristics
   - Master's degree characteristics
   - Vitae Researcher Development Framework.

Administrative and managerial arrangements for research students

Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Executive Dean of Faculty

5. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Executive Dean of Faculty will exercise overall responsibility for the welfare and academic progress of the research students in the Faculty. In particular, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Executive Dean of Faculty is responsible for ensuring that the requirements set out in the *Regulations* and this *Code* are followed and that the procedures for the allocation of supervisors and monitoring of progress of students are observed. In practice, many of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Executive Dean of Faculty's responsibilities will be delegated to a nominee, typically the Associate Dean (Doctoral College) and local Postgraduate Research Director.

6. The responsibilities of the Associate Dean (Doctoral College) and local Postgraduate Research Director are set out in the *Roles and responsibilities for Faculty staff involved in learning, teaching and postgraduate research student support*.

7. The terms of reference and membership of School, Faculty and University committees which cover postgraduate research matters can be found in the *Senate Governance*.

Annual review of postgraduate research degree provision

8. Unless a Professional, Regulatory and Statutory Body (PSRB) requirement dictates a specific format, postgraduate research degree programmes will be reviewed annually through two methods:

   i) Enhancement-oriented action plans: Data collected and analysed through the annual Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) will be shared with departments and used to create action plans using a common template. Action plans will be published and accessible to postgraduate research students to bring greater visibility to how their feedback is driving enhancements to the postgraduate research degree provision;

   ii) A list of active programmes with registration data will be compiled and reported to the Doctoral College Board on an annual basis. This will be used to identify any changes that might be required to the portfolio of postgraduate research degree provision.

Promotional information

9. All publicity materials associated with postgraduate research programmes (including web pages) should be clear, accurate, and of sufficient detail to enable prospective students to make informed choices.

Student files

10. Student files will be held electronically and contain information relating to the student's background, any relevant personal problems, and academic performance (for example six monthly review forms). Files must be secure and should be available only to relevant academic staff and other authorised personnel, in particular the supervisors, the Postgraduate Research Director, Associate Dean (Doctoral College), and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Executive Dean of Faculty. Any data must conform to the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations. Consideration should be given as to how long the Faculty should maintain all or part of these records, for example to enable references to be provided for students in the future or for further contact purposes.

Appointment and responsibilities of research supervisors

Appointment of supervisors

11. Students will be supervised by a supervisory team. In all cases at least one of the supervisors will have supervised solely or as a team member at least one research student through to successful completion of a doctoral degree.

    The University appoints three types of research supervisor:

    - Principal supervisor;
    - Co-supervisor;
    - Collaborative supervisor (for students undertaking some, or all, of their programme off-campus).

12. The principal supervisor will be the main point of contact between the student and the University. Members of the team with experience of supervising to successful completion of a doctoral degree will have a mentoring role in the supervisory team.

    In addition, the University will appoint a moderator for students registered at an Associated Institution.

Supervisor training

13. All staff new to the University who may take on postgraduate research student supervisory roles are required to attend the training programme provided within the Faculty by the relevant Associate Dean (Doctoral College) within 3-9 months of appointment.

14. Staff with no prior experience of postgraduate research student supervision and those who are keen to enhance their supervisory provision are strongly encouraged to complete the online supervisor training courses made available via the Doctoral College.

15. All staff who supervise postgraduate research students are required to complete online refresher training every three years.

16. Collaborative supervisors will be provided with a copy of this *Code of practice* and will be invited to attend the training sessions described in paragraph 13 above.

Principal supervisor

17. The principal supervisor is responsible for the overall direction of the student's programme of study towards a University's qualification and for the development of the student's related understanding, skills, and general progress. The principal supervisor will also have responsibility for the administration related to the student's programme of study.

Eligibility

18. The criteria for the appointment of the principal supervisor are set out in the *Regulations for research degrees*.

Appointment

19. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Executive Dean of Faculty is responsible for the appointment of a principal supervisor for each research student.

20. Where the appointee ceases to hold a relevant appointment, it may be desirable in appropriate circumstances for the principal supervisor to remain as a co-supervisor on the supervisory team. A new principal supervisor will be appointed.

21. Where research projects involve more than one Faculty, the student should be allocated to one of the Faculties (termed the lead Faculty) for administrative purposes, and this Faculty should appoint the principal supervisor. One or more co-supervisor(s) should be appointed from the other participating Faculty (or Faculties).

22. In appointing supervisors, Pro-Vice-Chancellors, Executive Deans of Faculty will take into consideration the workload of the individual supervisor so as not to overload them and so they can supervise effectively. Normally, an academic would not supervise more than six students as principal supervisor at any one time.

Changes to supervision

23. Changes to the supervisory team should be kept to a minimum to ensure that a student's studies are not unnecessarily disrupted. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Executive Dean of Faculty is responsible for appointing appropriate and adequate supervisory cover in the event of the absence of the principal supervisor (for example, sabbatical leave, health grounds, and permanent departure). In some instances, it may be appropriate for an eligible co-supervisor to fulfil the role of principal supervisor; in other instances, however, substitution of a new principal supervisor will be necessary. Any such cover arrangements should be monitored regularly. The student must be kept informed at all times of the arrangements for supervision.

24. Where a principal supervisor is due to leave the University and will not continue to be involved in the supervision of a postgraduate research student or when continuing in a co-supervisory role, the outgoing principal supervisor should endeavour to provide the replacement principal supervisor with the following information about the research project:

    (i) documentation about the students' progress and research plans. This might include recent reviews, minutes of supervisory meetings, and any

other pertinent documents generated as a part of the project;

(ii) financial details of the project, including spending to date and any specific spending plans;

(iii) health and safety documentation (for example: risk assessments; training in generic health and safety issues; any specific health and safety issues regarding the environment in which the student is working);

(iv) access to data and research materials ensuring compliance with research council, or other funder, requirements and legal requirements (for example in the handover of samples that fall under the remit of the Human Tissue Act);

(v) ethics documentation;

(vi) details of the student's training needs;

(vii) plans for dissemination of the work including crediting individuals involved with the project.

25. Where feasible, it is good practice for a meeting to take place involving the student, outgoing principal supervisor, and replacement supervisor to discuss the handover.

Responsibilities

26. The principal supervisor is responsible for:

(i) the overall direction and development of the student's programme of study and research and the welfare of the student to include, where appropriate, discussions regarding workload balance when paid work is undertaken in conjunction with the doctorate Where the student is registered collaboratively, this arrangement does not replace the employer's responsibilities for safe-working and well-being of their staff;

(ii) in consultation with the University's Ethics Committee, offering advice and guidance to the student on the ethical aspects of their research and associated protocols;

(iii) ensuring that, in circumstances in which the student's research is linked with a research contract, the interests of the student are safeguarded to secure the student's reasonable progress towards their higher degree;

(iv) providing the student with guidance about the nature of research; planning the research programme realistically; availability of and access to literature and other sources of information; fraudulent misrepresentation of research, plagiarism, and correct and appropriate acknowledgement of the work of others;

(v) discussing, agreeing and recording with students, at an early stage of their period of study, a programme of support and training designed specifically for the particular needs of the student and the area of research, ensuring that the student is aware of the need to attend compulsory modules. The principal supervisor will also make sure that the student is aware of the opportunities available for personal development planning and will ensure that the student is supported in this process – this will include use of the services offered by the Doctoral College's Researcher Development and Employability service. The principal supervisor will also encourage the student to engage with the wider research community through seminar and conference attendance;

(vi) when a co-supervisor has been appointed, clarifying and agreeing with the student and the co-supervisor the boundaries of their relative responsibilities towards each other and appropriate lines and means of communication between them;

(vii) advising the student on the continuing financial viability of the research

project;

(viii) ensuring the student is aware of their responsibilities in terms of health and safety in general and particularly in relation to the Faculty/School and, where appropriate, the requirements of the research programme;

(ix) arranging with individual students a programme of regular meetings in order to maintain effective oversight of the research project;

(x) giving the student detailed advice on the various stages of their work, completion dates, and requirements with the purpose of helping them to progress without undue hindrance through the project and to submit the thesis (or equivalent) within the maximum period of registration;

(xi) advising the student about the confirmation process and facilitating completion within the specified timescale;

(xii) ensuring that any written work submitted by the student during the registration period and, where applicable, during the resubmission period is returned in a reasonable timescale with constructive and effective feedback (normally within four weeks of submission);

(xiii) as appropriate, arranging for research students to present their work at least annually (and on a semi-formal basis) to graduate and/or staff gatherings within the Faculty's postgraduate research student training system;

(xiv) making sure that the student is kept fully aware of their progress, including where their progress gives cause for concern;

(xv) advising the student where they may seek support with English language, especially where English is not the student's mother-tongue;

(xvi) conducting six monthly progress reviews;

(xvii) keeping records as required within the Faculty/unit and to conform with institutional requirements for the demonstration of good supervision.

Co-supervisor

Eligibility and appointment

27. The criteria for the appointment of the co-supervisor(s) are set out in the *Regulations for research degrees*.

Responsibilities

28. The co-supervisor is responsible for:

(i) in collaboration with the student's principal supervisor, guiding students on particular aspects of the programme of study and research, to include, where appropriate, discussions regarding workload balance when paid work is undertaken in conjunction with the doctorate;

(ii) in collaboration with the principal supervisor, providing the student with guidance about the nature of research; planning the research programme realistically; availability of and access to literature and other sources of information; fraudulent misrepresentation of research, plagiarism, and correct and appropriate acknowledgement of the work of others;

(iii) arranging with the student and the principal supervisor, a programme of regular meetings in order to maintain effective oversight and co-ordination of the student's research project;

(iv) being available at other appropriate times when the student may require specific guidance or advice;

(v) in collaboration with the principal supervisor, giving the student detailed advice on the various stages of their work, completion dates, and

requirements with the purpose of helping them to progress through the project and to submit the thesis (or equivalent) within the required timescale;

(vi) in collaboration with the principal supervisor, ensuring that any written work submitted by the student during the registration period and, where applicable, during the resubmission period is returned in a reasonable timescale with constructive and effective feedback (normally within four weeks of submission);

(vii) in collaboration with the principal supervisor, making sure that the student is kept fully aware of their progress.

Collaborative supervisor

29. While the principal supervisor remains ultimately responsible for the overall direction and development of the student's programme of study and research, if the student is based in another location for some, or all, of their research project, the collaborative supervisor is responsible for providing to the student immediate and continuous supervisory guidance where the research is being undertaken. In the case of collaborative co-supervision, the collaborative supervisor would fulfil the same responsibilities as a co-supervisor. Contact the Doctoral College for information on the approval process for collaborative supervisors.

Eligibility and appointment

30. The criteria for the appointment of collaborative supervisor(s) are set out in the *Regulations for research degrees*.

Responsibilities

31. The collaborative supervisor is responsible for:

(i) in collaboration with the student's principal supervisor, guiding the student on particular aspects of the programme of study and research, where they have local and/or specialist expertise;

(ii) providing day-to-day help and advice at the collaborating organisation;

(iii) in collaboration with the principal supervisor, providing the student with guidance about the nature of research and the standards expected; about planning the research programme realistically; about the availability of and access to literature and other sources of information; and about plagiarism and correct and appropriate acknowledgement of the work of others;

(iv) for arranging with the student and the principal supervisor, a programme of regular meetings in order to maintain effective oversight and co-ordination of the student's research project;

(v) being available at other appropriate times when the student may require specific guidance or advice;

(vi) giving the student detailed advice on the various stages of their work, completion dates, and requirements with the purpose of helping them to progress through the project and to submit the thesis (or equivalent) within the maximum period of registration;

(vii) in collaboration with the principal supervisor, requesting written work from the student and for considering suitable arrangements for the confirmation of registration, where appropriate. Written work will be returned in a reasonable time with constructive, written criticism from both University and collaborative supervisors (normally within four weeks of submission);

(viii) in collaboration with the principal supervisor, making sure that students are kept fully aware of their progress;

(ix) in collaboration with the principal supervisor, ensuring that the progress reviews take place promptly and by whatever means are suitable for the circumstances when face-to-face meetings are not possible.

Admission and initial registration

32. Applications shall be made on the standard University application system for higher degrees by research.

33. Applicants will be expected to hold appropriate academic qualifications and/or experience. The general entrance requirements are defined in the *Regulations for research degrees*.

34. All procedures connected with the application and admission of research students shall comply with:

- Equality Act (2010)
- Data Protection Act (2018)
- Copyright Designs & Patents Act (1988).

35. Prospective students will normally be interviewed prior to admission. Ideally, the interview will be held in person, but other methods such as videocall are acceptable. The interview will be conducted by a panel of at least two members of staff, one of which will be a research active member of academic staff, normally the proposed principal supervisor. All members of the panel shall be trained in selection and admissions procedures. Where it is not possible to interview the applicant, special dispensation must be granted by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Executive Dean of Faculty who will judge whether sufficient information has been provided on which to make an informed judgement. The application of all applicants accepted for a programme must be reviewed by two members of staff.

36. Applicants will be required to satisfy the admissions panel of an ability to understand and communicate in both written and spoken English that is adequate for the purposes of pursuing the programme, consistent with the University's current threshold level in IELTS or equivalent. It may be appropriate to ask for more than the minimum level in some disciplines. The student may be required to attend a programme of instruction in English.

37. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Executive Dean of Faculty is responsible for making a formal decision on the prospective student's application. In making this decision the Faculty should assure itself that appropriate facilities, financial resources, and supervisory staff are available to support the research proposal. It is recognised in this context that research proposals develop and change over time.

38. Where supervision is provided by more than one Faculty, the decision to admit a student must have the written endorsement from all relevant Faculties on the application form. Prior permission to use equipment or other facilities in the other Faculty will also need to be obtained as part of this process. One of the Faculties will allocate a principal supervisor and be the student's "home" Faculty for administrative purposes. Co-supervisor(s) will be appointed from the other Faculty (or Faculties).

39. Where an application to study on a collaborative basis is being considered, a formal, written, collaborative agreement between the University and the collaborating organisation will be required in accordance with the *Code of practice for academic partnerships*.

40. A formal offer letter will be issued to successful applicants by Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions. The offer letter will set out the terms and conditions on which the offer is made and will include the method of acceptance, together with guidance on offer conditions and related general information.

41. The letter will encourage students to follow the link to the University's postgraduate research pages which contain important up-to-date information.

42. The Faculty should advise the student, in writing, before they commence their research project of the following:

- The name of the principal supervisor and co-supervisor;
- The title or brief outline of the proposed research project;
- The terms and conditions of any sponsorship connected with or administered by the Faculty;
- Web or other references for any further Faculty-specific information.

43. As part of the registration procedure, students will be supplied with the relevant handbook, this *Code of practice*, and the *Regulations*. On registering for their research degree, students shall declare that they will comply with the Charter, Statutes and Ordinances and the *Regulations* of the University.

44. Research student applications will be subject to the University's policy on postgraduate research degree admissions.

Ethics and data retention

Ethical considerations

45. Research may require an ethical review by the University of Surrey Ethics Committee, and supervisors should ensure that ethical approval is sought where appropriate. Further details may be found on the Assurance website.

46. Students are expected to comply with the University's Open Access to Research Outputs Procedure and the Research Data Management Procedure.

Student information and induction

Handbooks

47. Each Faculty shall issue each student with the relevant handbook for research students before they commence the research project. The objective of a handbook is primarily to provide students with the key information they will need during their research degree. The handbook will be the vehicle by which the Faculty informs students of specific expectations it has of its research students; and will inform the student of what can be expected from the Faculty.

48. MPhil, PhD, and MD programmes use a standardised template for their handbooks. Owing to their distinctive nature, practitioner doctorates will each use their own handbook, the content of which is checked for accuracy through validation and review procedures.

Induction

49. Postgraduate research students, regardless of start date, receive a comprehensive induction to their degree programme. The induction programme is comprised of centrally organised events, to provide students with an opportunity to meet the Dean of the Doctoral College, the Associate Deans (Doctoral College), to network with new and existing postgraduate researchers, and to hear from the key central services which support postgraduate research students.

50. The central events are complemented by local inductions at the Faculty and School level. These induction programmes are designed to familiarise students with their local working environment, including an opportunity to meet local staff (academic and administrative), meet students and researchers, and receive an induction on local resources. They are also given information on any health and safety

requirements and should be familiarised with local policies.

Academic misconduct and plagiarism

51. The University's arrangements for defining and dealing with academic misconduct are set out in its *Code of practice for handling allegations of research misconduct*. Academic misconduct that occurs in taught units of assessment that are taken as part of a research degree programme are dealt with under the *Regulations for academic misconduct*.

52. Students are reminded that the work they submit for assessment must be their own. To this end the following should be noted:

    All theses and other work submitted for research degrees assessment must carry the following statement of originality signed and dated by the student:

    This thesis and the work to which it refers are the results of my own efforts. Any ideas, data, images or text resulting from the work of others (whether published or unpublished and including any content generated by a deep learning/artificial intelligence tool) are fully identified as such within the work and attributed to their originator in the text, bibliography or in footnotes. This thesis has not been submitted in whole or in part for any other academic degree or professional qualification. I agree that the University has the right to submit my work to the plagiarism detection service TurnitinUK for originality checks. Whether or not drafts have been so-assessed, the University reserves the right to require an electronic version of the final document (as submitted) for assessment as above.

Fitness to practise and support for study

53. The University's arrangements for defining and dealing with these matters are given in the *Regulations for fitness to practise* and the *Regulations for support to study*.

Responsibilities of students

54. Research students have the following responsibilities:

To themselves

(i) to take responsibility for the progress of their research, ensuring that it is completed within the agreed timeframe, and to seek guidance from the supervisory team and others to resolve difficulties, as necessary;

(ii) to ensure that they have regard for the safety of themselves and others, and to make themselves familiar with the University's Safety Policy Statement and any Faculty-specific guidance;

(iii) full-time students are required to pursue their research project and development on a full-time basis (normally 37.5 hours a week in the UK). This is pro-rated as appropriate for part-time students;

(iv) to attend compulsory training courses offered by the Doctoral College's Researcher Development Programme. Training needs will be appraised with the supervisory team on a six-monthly basis. Students will also follow a discipline-specific training programme as agreed with the supervisory team;

(v) where holiday entitlement is not specified by a sponsor, students may take no more than 25 working days per year in addition to University closures;

To their supervisors

(vi) to discuss the supervisory relationship with their supervisors at the earliest opportunity so that they understand their respective roles and obligations, and to clarify any aspects which they do not fully understand, and to discuss the type of guidance and comment they would find most helpful;

(vii) to discuss with their supervisors the aims and objectives of the research and suitable background reading;

(viii) to discuss with their supervisors any relevant funding requirements for the research project;

(ix) to keep the supervisors fully informed of developments in the research and to deviate from agreed aims and objectives only by agreement;

(x) to take the initiative in raising with their supervisors any problems or difficulties which they encounter and to submit their best work at all times;

(xi) to ensure that they attend agreed scheduled meetings and maintain the progress of their work in accordance with the stages agreed with their supervisors;

(xii) to submit written progress reports to their supervisors at their direction by specified deadlines, and at least every six months;

(xiii) to discuss with their supervisors, arrangements for applying for confirmation of registration, if applicable, and for the submission of their thesis for their award, with the aim to resolve any difficulties or issues of concern;

(xiv) to agree the authorship and content of work for publication in accordance with University guidance;

(xv) to submit the thesis within the maximum period of registration;

To others

(xvi) to respect confidentiality (both professional and commercial) of not only their own findings but also those of others with which they are not directly involved, but with which they may become aware, by virtue of their position as a postgraduate student within the Faculty/University. All such matters must be treated with absolute discretion and integrity at all times;

(xvii) to exercise professionalism and be sensitive to the needs of colleagues with whom facilities are shared;

(xviii) to maintain accurate and comprehensive records of the work undertaken, consistent with the University's policy on data retention;

(xix) to communicate in a professional manner with any sponsors supported as necessary by the University.

Development of research students

55. Research students should be helped to gain the knowledge and skills they need to complete their programmes effectively and to prepare themselves for their subsequent career. All postgraduate research students have access to an extensive suite of skills training and discipline-specific training consistent with the Researcher Development Framework. Students and supervisors should agree a programme of training ensuring that the compulsory elements are included. Students and supervisors will keep this under review and formally report on progress every six months. The Faculty should ensure that training offered to students fulfils the specific requirements, if any, of the relevant Research Council(s).

56. Students should also have access to language support and academic writing skills courses, necessary for their research, provided by the Doctoral College's Researcher Development Programme.

57. The Faculty should maintain on file progress reports recording all training events, attendance at conferences, workshops or similar. and any publications. Where students are studying part-time and/or remotely from the University, they should discuss how to gain access to the necessary training. Unsatisfactory academic progress procedures will be instigated against students who do not attend compulsory or agreed skills training.

58. Faculties will provide appropriate opportunities for research students to present their work and receive feedback and guidance from researchers in their discipline.

Teaching activities

59. The University recognises that postgraduate researcher engagement in supporting the learning and teaching of others can provide them with an opportunity to develop a range of personal and academic skills and can help to reinforce knowledge of their subject area. To this end, the University has put in place a *Code of practice for postgraduate researchers who support teaching* to set out how postgraduate researchers will be used to support the teaching and learning of taught students. The *Code of practice* seeks to ensure that wherever postgraduate researchers are involved in teaching, appropriate measures are in place to safeguard both their experience and those of the students they teach.

Monitoring of student progress

Supervisory meetings

60. Regular meetings will be the primary mechanism of monitoring progress and for academic feedback between supervisors and students. Where research is being conducted at distance, an effective method(s) of regular contact shall be agreed on between the student and the supervisors (e.g., telephone, email, videocall).

61. Supervisors and students should agree the general frequency (at least monthly but students and supervisors are at liberty to agree to more frequent contact than the prescribed minimum) and nature of supervisory meetings. Where a submission of work is required, students should be provided with sufficient notice of any deadline.

62. A written record of each supervision meeting will be kept, covering the main points discussed, and agreed actions for both the supervisor(s) and the student. The record should be produced by the student and signed by all present. The frequency of meetings will be recorded on SITS and monitored by the Doctoral College.

Review meetings and reports

63. Student progress will be formally monitored at six- and twelve-month intervals. The purpose of this procedure is to provide formal feedback to the student; and to provide a mechanism for reporting progress and concerns of the student or supervisory team to the Faculty and, if necessary, the Admission, Progression and Examination Sub-committee (APESC).

64. Review meetings may be conducted at distance by a method agreed between the student and the supervisors (e.g., videocall).

65. An unsatisfactory outcome at a six monthly progress review, or failure to submit the form, will result in the initiation of unsatisfactory academic progress procedures in accordance with the *Regulations for research degrees* unless a request for recognition of extenuating circumstances is found to be valid by an extenuating circumstances panel.

66. Students on Practitioner Doctorate programmes must comply with the supervisory and progress monitoring requirements of the individual programme. Where specific programmes require documented progress reviews at least every six months, these will take precedence.

67. The progress review form will be submitted to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Executive Dean

of Faculty and will be retained on the student's file, and is confidential to those parties involved in the review process and appropriate officers of the University.

68. Students who are temporarily withdrawn from registration at the deadline for the progress review need not be reviewed at that time. Their review must be completed on their return (this fact communicated to the Admission, Progression and Examination Sub-committee).

69. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Executive Dean of Faculty provides independent oversight of the review process and will identify any action required of the Faculty (such as resource issues, training, supervision).

Unsatisfactory progress

70. A student's registration may be terminated on the grounds of unsatisfactory academic progress. The process for dealing with unsatisfactory academic progress is described in the *Regulations for research degrees*.

Feedback

71. The University will participate in the national Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) on a bi-annual basis. The results will be analysed at the programme, Faculty, and University level and action plans drawn up accordingly. The response to the survey will be managed by the Doctoral College Board.

72. In between the national administrations of PRES, the University will continue to utilise feedback received from Postgraduate Researcher Engagement Forums and internal surveys to support the student experience.

73. General issues can also be addressed by raising them through the Postgraduate Research Student Engagement Fora and through student representatives.

74. The Doctoral College's Researcher Development and Employability Team also offers generic advice to students experiencing difficulties. Students may also find it helpful to seek support from the Students' Union and/or Centre for Wellbeing.

75. Feedback from other stakeholders, such as external examiners, will be monitored by the Doctoral College Board.

Guidance to students experiencing issues or problems

76. Students experiencing issues or problems with any part of their work (including supervision) that are detrimental to achieving the required learning outcomes and inhibiting progress with the research are expected, as a first step, to discuss concerns informally, with the supervisor, to describe the difficulties being experienced.

77. If this informal discussion does not bring about a satisfactory resolution to the matter, then students should discuss the matter with the Postgraduate Research Director for the School/Centre in the first instance (or, if the supervisor is the Postgraduate Research Director, then the Head of School/Centre or their Deputy).

78. As a next step, the Faculty Associate Dean (Doctoral College) may be consulted.

79. If raising problems through these channels does not bring about a satisfactory resolution, then students are entitled to make a formal complaint to the University. The Students' Union offers advice and guidance to students with concerns or complaints.

The confirmation process

80. It is a requirement that the following guidelines be adopted.

81. The principal aims of the confirmation procedure are to:

- Evaluate the student's approach to the research problem in terms of the theory and proposed or adopted research methods, in order to establish that the future objectives and methods are feasible, appropriate, and likely to form a suitable and sufficient programme for degree candidature.

- Ensure that the candidate has the necessary motivation and is making adequate progress to complete a thesis/portfolio and within the required timescale.
- Consider evidence that suitable training, including compulsory elements, has been satisfactorily undertaken.
- Provide the candidate with feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the research and its presentation.
- Consider arrangements for supervision and facilities for the work and ensure that both are appropriate for completion of the project within the maximum period of registration.

82. Candidates will be required to submit a written report, comprising the following material:

- A definition of the research problem, presenting the objectives of the research, the central ideas and concepts, contextualised by a critical review of the literature.
- A summary of progress to date, including a reasoned case for the research methods adopted thus far.
- Any material already published.
- A detailed plan for the next six months with measurable targets and an outline plan for completion of the final thesis.
- A statement of any training undertaken, as agreed with the supervisors, to underpin the research programme including compulsory training programmes.
- Faculties may provide further specifications and guidance as necessary.

83. The principal supervisor will advise the student of the date, venue, and time of the confirmation examination. The student will be required to submit the report at least ten University working days prior to the examination.

84. The confirmation will be conducted in accordance with the process set out in the *Regulations for research degrees*.

Preparation of the thesis

Supervision during preparation of thesis

85. The thesis is the presentation of original work by the student. While the supervisory team may offer guidance before the submission of the thesis, the ultimate responsibility for the content must rest with the student. Such guidance may include advice on structure, content, and presentation of the thesis.

86. Whilst any advice or opinions offered by the supervisory team will be provided in good faith and to the best of the team's judgement, it must be clearly understood that the supervisors are neither qualified nor empowered to predict the outcome of assessment of the thesis. This judgement can only be made by examiners.

Format of thesis

87. The format of the thesis or portfolio is defined in the *Regulations for research degrees*. The thesis or portfolio should include a signed Declaration of Originality.

Submission of thesis/portfolio

88. Between two and six months prior to submission of the thesis, an Entry Form for Examination is submitted by the candidate to the Pro-Vice- Chancellor, Executive Dean of Faculty. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Executive Dean of Faculty will review the examiner nominations and the case made for their appointment. If satisfied, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Executive Dean of Faculty will make a recommendation to the Admission, Progression and Examination Sub-committee that the panel be appointed.

89. The candidate is responsible for submitting to the Research Degrees Office an

electronic copy of the thesis in the form prescribed by the *Regulations for research degrees* for examination purposes. The Office will arrange for the thesis to be sent to the examiners.

90. All formal communication with examiners, prior to the examination, will be carried out by University staff and not by the student. Post examination, it is permissible for students, when necessary, to contact internal examiners for the purpose of clarification on corrections or revisions. Communication must be limited as examiners are not to be drawn into a supervisory relationship.

91. The thesis submission date will be recorded by the Research Degrees Office.

Early submission of thesis

92. Any research student of confirmed status may apply to the Admission, Progression and Examination Sub-committee for early submission provided that the case for reduction is supported by the supervisors and Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Executive Dean of Faculty.

93. Applications may not be made until after successful confirmation for PhD students.

94. Applications should be made to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Executive Dean of Faculty who will assess the body of work/progress and give opinion on whether or not this is likely to be sufficient to permit the early submission of an adequate thesis in the field.

95. The case will be forwarded to the Admission, Progression and Examination Sub-committee which will consider the application together with any other relevant information relating to the student's registration and status.

96. Submission must occur within six months of permission being granted and, if it does not take place, registration will revert to the usual periods and time limits.

97. Agreement to permit early submission will not alter the qualifying periods for transfer to continuing status. Approval of early submission will not prejudge or guarantee the outcome of any subsequent examinations.

98. Students who are granted permission to submit early will be informed of this in writing. This letter will include the statement that such permission does not in any way seek to prejudge the considerations of the examiners or guarantee a successful outcome of any subsequent assessment.

The final examination

Nature of examination

99. The final examination for research degrees comprises:

- An initial assessment of the written thesis or portfolio;
- An oral examination, *viva voce.*

Viva voce panel

100. The *viva voce* examination will be conducted as described in the *Regulations for research degrees*. The University also has guidance on the conduct of *viva voce* examinations.

Guidance on the authorship of publications and other outputs originating from doctoral research

101. The University provides guidance on the protocols, and associated procedures, which should be followed by supervisors and research students when planning the authorship of external publications, and/or associated other outputs, originating from a doctoral research programme. This guidance is not intended to be applied to the documents produced as part of the normal assessment and monitoring of a research student's progress nor to the final thesis. Recognising that practice differs both between and within disciplines this guidance is not prescriptive but seeks to establish the terms and references that should inform discussions between students and supervisors wishing to

publish the outputs that arise from any research activity being undertaken under the name and authority of the University of Surrey.

Complaints procedures

102. The grievance procedures are set out in the University's *Procedure for complaints.* The Students' Union offers advice and guidance to students wishing to make a complaint.

Appeals procedures

103. The grounds for and procedures for appeals are set out in the *Regulations for academic appeals.* The Students' Union offers advice and guidance to students wishing to make an academic appeal.