

# **Code Of Practice for Research Degrees**

## **Documentation Management**

### Document Record

Maintained by:	Quality Assurance
Owned by:	Senate
Approval Date:	2014
Location of Master Document:	<a href="https://intra.brunel.ac.uk/s/QSO/Team/Research%20Degrees/Code%20of%20Practice">https://intra.brunel.ac.uk/s/QSO/Team/Research Degrees/Code of Practice</a>

### Version Control

Document Version	Amendments	Amended By	Date	Approved By
3.0	Major revisions following review.	Head of Quality Assurance	July 2022	University Education Committee
3.1	Revisions following 2023 annual review: updates to requirements for supervisors; amendment to progression panel composition; additional guidance for MPhil awards; additional guidance on the management of provisional progression – applicable from June 2023	Head of Quality Assurance	May 2023	Senate

**This Code sets out the University’s mandatory policies and procedures which amplify and articulate the University’s Senate Regulations.**

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# 1 Introduction

- 1.1 Brunel University London is a research-intensive institution that provides a stimulating environment for those undertaking a research degree. Researchers are integral to the research culture of the University and Brunel is committed to the continued enhancement of its research degree provision.
- 1.2 The University offers programmes of research leading to a PhD or MPhil. The University also offers the Brunel Integrated PhD and professional doctorates.
- 1.3 This Code of Practice sets out the University's policies and procedures which amplify and articulate Senate Regulation 5, which governs all research degrees, and includes regulations relating to the minimum and maximum periods of registration for the various awards and the requirements for award.
- 1.4 This Code summarises the University's requirements for the management of postgraduate research degrees and is designed to provide clear and useful information for postgraduate researchers and the academic and administrative staff involved in supporting them. It sets out the duties and responsibilities of the postgraduate researcher, their supervisory teams and the Departments and Colleges of the University. It summarises and, where appropriate, provides links to information that enable staff and postgraduate researchers to both understand their responsibilities to each other and what they can expect from one another. The Code of Practice should be read in conjunction with information provided by Departments and Colleges.
- 1.5 All Higher Education providers are expected to have effective processes and procedures in place in relation to research degrees. The [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) sets out Expectations and provides Advice and Guidance which all providers of research degrees are expected to adhere to.
- 1.6 The Code of Practice applies to all those registered for a postgraduate research degree, whether they are studying at the University, at an institution which is part of a collaborative agreement with the University, or whether they are studying wholly or partially away from the University. This ensures that they receive a comparable experience wherever they are studying.
- 1.7 The Code of Practice will be reviewed regularly through the governance structures of the University to ensure that it remains current.
- 1.8 Whilst the principles established in the Code of Practice apply to all the University's postgraduate researchers, the University does offer research degree programmes (such as professional doctorates and the Brunel Integrated PhD) which may not in all respects follow the timelines and structures defined in this Code of Practice. For such programmes, researchers will be issued with additional information, which may be in the form of a programme specification and/or programme-specific handbook. However, all those registered for a postgraduate research degree should be familiar with the Code of Practice.

## 2 The Research Environment

- 2.1 [‘Brunel 2030’](#) defines key areas of focus for the University until 2030 and indicates that:

*‘Our world-leading research will focus on those areas in which we can integrate academic rigour with the needs of governments, industry and the not-for-profit sector, delivering creative solutions to global challenges and bringing economic, social and cultural benefit.*

*We will strengthen our research culture, seeking to attract, develop and retain exceptional academic staff and forge long-lasting partnerships in the UK and internationally to accelerate the impact of our research on the people, societies and economies that will benefit the most.*

*Our Research Institutes and Research Centres will pioneer world-leading research inspired by an ambition to address society’s most pressing challenges, in collaboration with partners from across the globe.’*

- 2.2 Postgraduate researchers are therefore admitted to an environment which provides support for doing and learning about research and where excellent research is occurring. Examples of recognition of this include the University’s attainment of the EU HR Excellence in Research award (since 2011) for its commitment to supporting researchers, and the Athena SWAN Bronze Award for its efforts to promote the equal representation of women in science-related subjects. More information can be found [here](#).
- 2.3 To celebrate the achievements of postgraduate researchers, the University currently awards a number of prizes, including Vice-Chancellor’s prizes for Doctoral Research; and Research Conference prizes.
- 2.4 The University will give every postgraduate researcher registered with the University and studying in the University access to the following (or equivalent facilities for those based away from the Uxbridge Campus):
- A supervisory team of at least 2 supervisors which provides knowledge and experience and with whom the postgraduate researcher is able to meet to discuss progress at regular intervals, and from whom they can expect good quality guidance and feedback
  - A safe environment in which to work (Universities UK issues guidelines on safety for researchers, but Departments will also specify more detailed requirements where necessary)
  - Adequate space in which to work and access without unreasonable delay to shared items of equipment
  - Access to all relevant facilities and appropriate research governance framework;
  - Access to a programme of skills training as advocated by UK Research and Innovation and formal training as necessary in their discipline
  - Support to maximise opportunities to present their work to different audiences in order to enhance their reputation as researchers and build career opportunities
  - Regular opportunities to provide feedback on the supervision and training received

- 2.5 The University has an approved policy regarding [minimum resource allocation for postgraduate researchers studying on campus](#). This policy also contains recommendations for good practice in relation to resources. Information regarding resources for postgraduate researchers studying off-campus as part of formal partnerships will be defined in appropriate published documentation.

#### **Annual Leave**

- 2.6 Annual leave should be arranged in consultation with the supervisory team. Full-time postgraduate researchers are entitled to 30 days annual leave (pro-rata for those registered part-time) from their start date. University closure dates are in addition to this allocation.

#### **Maternity/Paternity/Adoption Leave**

- 2.7 Postgraduate researchers are entitled to up to 52 weeks of maternity or shared parental leave. Paternity leave will be up to 10 days. Adoption leave is granted on the same basis as maternity leave. None of these periods will be included in the maximum permitted period of abeyance as defined in [Senate Regulation 5](#) and the Code of Practice.

- 2.8 Postgraduate researchers should take account of the terms and conditions within any stipend, bursary, or other funding arrangements which may be in place. They are encouraged to contact their Supervisory Team in the first instance. The University's [Student Pregnancy, Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Policy](#) provides more information.

#### **Reasonable Adjustments**

- 2.9 Postgraduate researchers with a disability or dyslexia should register with the [Disability and Dyslexia Service](#), which will complete a support profile document to confirm any recommended reasonable adjustments whilst the postgraduate researcher is studying, or during examination.

#### **Involvement in supporting teaching and learning**

- 2.10 Opportunities may arise for postgraduate researchers to become involved in supporting teaching and learning. The University's [Policy for the Employment of Postgraduate Research Students in Supporting Teaching and Learning](#) provides information on this.

### **3 Wellbeing**

- 3.1 Brunel is committed to ensuring that all postgraduate researchers, and staff are able to study, work, relax and socialise free from prejudice, discrimination, bullying and harassment, and have an excellent researcher / employee experience. The University works to advance equality, diversity and inclusion throughout its campus, online environment, and in the experiences it offers; and ensure that equality of opportunity is at the heart of our education provision and our student support services so that everyone can reach their full potential. The University's here: [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, Social Justice for All, 2021 - 2024](#) provides more detail.

- 3.2 The wellbeing of postgraduate researchers is of the highest importance and is fundamental to their success. Staff and Postgraduate Researchers should prioritise wellbeing when weighing decisions which affect a postgraduate researcher's registration status, progression, or examination. Supervisors should take care to refer their postgraduate researchers to wellbeing when they report distress.
- 3.3 Staff may access information about student services, including the Student Centre, Student Support and Welfare, Student Wellbeing, and the Meeting house via the [Brunel intranet](#).
- 3.4 Postgraduate researchers will find information and a booking facility for counsellors, mental health advisers and disability and dyslexia advisers via the [student intranet](#). This also includes emergency contact resources, "report and support", and external resources.
- 3.5 Staff and postgraduate researchers are able to access Report and Support, which is a resource available for all to report their concerns about someone, including themselves.

## **4 Expected Submission Dates and Modes of Study**

- 4.1 Postgraduate researchers can study either full-time or part-time. The Brunel Integrated PhD is studied in full-time mode only. Information regarding available modes of study for Professional Doctorates is provided on the University's [website](#).
- 4.2 Full-time study is suitable for those who are fully funded and/or those who do not anticipate having to pursue substantial periods of paid work during their studies, for example to meet fees and maintenance costs. Full-time study should be regarded as being the equivalent of a full-time job and is not restricted to studying during term-time.
- 4.3 Part-time study is suitable for those who anticipate having to pursue additional paid work during their studies, or who have other commitments that will limit their ability to study full-time. Part-time study is not restricted to term-time.
- 4.4 Support is provided to postgraduate researchers to assist them in completing their studies and submitting their thesis on time.
- 4.5 The table below sets out the minimum and maximum period of registration for each research degree and the University's expectations for the date of submission of the thesis. Postgraduate researchers are not normally permitted to submit their thesis after their registration period; late submission is allowed only in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the University's Provost. Similarly, submission before the minimum period of registration would not normally be permitted as this period reflects a realistic minimum time to be able to undertake the research and write a thesis whilst under the supervision of staff at the University. Early submission is only permitted in the most exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Provost.

**Table 1: minimum and maximum period of registration, and expected submission dates**

Degree and Mode	Minimum period of registration (months)	Expected Submission Date (months)	Maximum period of registration (months)
<b>Full-Time</b>			
PhD	24	36	48
MPhil/LLM	12	18	24
EngD/Brunel Integrated PhD*	36	48	60
DrPH	30	36	60
<b>Part-Time</b>			
PhD	48	72	96
MPhil/LLM	24	36	48
DrPH	48	72	84

## 5 Fees and Funding

- 5.1 Information for applicants regarding the fees the University charges for research degrees can be found [here](#). Other matters relating to the charging of fees and financial support can be found at: <https://intra.brunel.ac.uk/Pages/ForStudents.aspx>. Please see [Student Financial Policy](#) for further information.
- 5.2 Information regarding studentships, Doctoral Training Partnerships, and PhDs with Industry can be found via the University's [Research Degree](#) webpage.

### **The University Hardship Fund**

- 5.3 The University [Hardship Fund](#) provides financial assistance to Postgraduate Researchers studying in England who face difficulty in meeting their living costs or course costs. This can be due to ongoing personal circumstances, or because the individual falls into hardship unexpectedly and through no fault of their own. Further details are held on the website below.

### **Support for students with disabilities**

- 5.4 The Disabled Student's Allowance (DSA) pays for any extra costs UK disabled students may have in attending their course as a direct result of their disability. For more information or for help in applying to either of these schemes, Students may contact the [Disability and Dyslexia Service](#).



## **Scholarships and Bursaries**

- 5.5 Brunel University London offer scholarships, bursaries and discounts to Home and International students. These are awarded based on a whole range of criteria. Further details are available [here](#).

## **6 Application and Admission**

- 6.1 The University's [Admissions Policy](#) and [How to Apply](#) webpage provide all information to support applicants to a Brunel Research Degree. The University Admissions Office provides advice on a wide range of academic and professional qualifications in order to assist decisions about whether or not to recommend admission. Recommended levels of English Language competence are also published by the University on each course page.
- 6.2 For applicants who are responding to an advert, it is the responsibility of the Head of Department or nominee to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to assess applications, conduct interviews and oversee all matters relating to the supervision and assessment of researchers. In certain situations, applicants may have had informal contacts with members of staff and have discussed their ideas for their research degree prior to making a formal application. Any informal contacts are not a guarantee of an offer of a place at the University. Decisions to admit applicants are made by the relevant College on behalf of the University.
- 6.3 Admission of researchers wishing to undertake their studies off-campus is covered in the University's [Policy for Admission and Management of Postgraduate Researchers Studying in Off-campus Mode](#).

### **Application and Interview Process – Guidance to Staff**

- 6.4 The Departmental PGR Director should consider applications, liaising with potential supervisors. A decision to reject an application should not be undertaken by one member of academic staff. Grounds for rejection would include, but are not limited to, factors such as:
- Standard of written or oral English
  - Inappropriate academic or professional background
  - Quality of the proposal
  - Insufficient expertise amongst the staff or inadequate/inappropriate resources available to the Department.
- 6.5 The reason for a rejection at any stage must be communicated clearly to the applicant and recorded on the relevant admissions forms.
- 6.6 It is University policy that following preliminary consideration, all applicants must be interviewed by at least two members of academic staff, one of whom should not be part of the proposed supervisory team.

- 6.7 The panel will, as a minimum, consist of the Departmental PGR Director (or their delegated member of staff) and the proposed Principal Supervisor.
- 6.8 Interviews should ideally be face-to-face, but may be undertaken virtually. In either case, the appropriate form must be completed as a record of the interview.
- 6.9 Interviews, in conjunction with the written application, need to establish:
- The candidate's potential to undertake original research in the proposed field of study
  - The candidate's interest and enthusiasm for undertaking a PhD
  - That the applicant is likely to complete within the expected period of time
  - The statement of research interest is the applicant's own
  - That the mode of study (i.e. full-time or part-time) is the appropriate one for the applicant
  - That the candidate is appropriately qualified and has the necessary English language skills
  - That the supervisor and Department have the requisite knowledge, skills, capacity and resources to provide the appropriate level of support and supervision
- 6.10 Interviews may also need to explore issues such as:
- Whether any barriers exist should the applicant be required to work away from the University as part of their studies
  - The applicant's employment commitments, if any, and their possible effect on the decision regarding the appropriate mode of study
- 6.11 Colleges will ensure that details of the interview process, including the names of interview panel members and justification for the recommended outcome are clearly recorded on the appropriate form.
- 6.12 The Head of Department will consider the recommendation of the interview panel and is required to approve the outcome of the application assessment process, taking account of workload and resource implications. In approving applications, the Head of Department is affirming that, as far as reasonably possible, the areas referred to above have been considered, that the necessary resources are available and that it is appropriate to admit the applicant to undertake a research degree.
- 6.13 Decisions regarding applications must be returned to the Admissions Office in a timely manner.

### **Transfers**

- 6.14 Consideration may be given to making offers to applicants who have commenced their research at another institution and who wish to register with the University to work under the supervision of staff at Brunel for an award of the University. However, such applicants will be advised that the expectation is that their period of registration will be the same as for all other postgraduate researchers, with a minimum registration period as defined in section 3 above. In order to be awarded a research degree from the University, in line with practice in the sector, postgraduate researchers will normally have completed at least two-thirds of their work whilst registered with the University.

Therefore applicants who are in the advanced stages of their research may be best advised to remain registered at their current institution. All other provisions of the Code of Practice would apply to such postgraduate researchers.

- 6.15 Where a postgraduate researcher already enrolled at the University is transferring between Colleges, this must be approved by the respective Deputy Deans Academic Affairs.

### **Enrolment**

- 6.16 Postgraduate researchers must enroll on an annual basis when prompted to do so by the University. Such enrolment must include updating, where necessary, all necessary information including addresses and contact details to ensure that records are correctly maintained.

## **7 Induction**

- 7.1 Induction refers to the process by which postgraduate researchers acclimatize and adapt to their new role at Brunel. As such it should be considered as an ongoing process, supported by various induction events and other activities.
- 7.2 Colleges will arrange to welcome postgraduate researchers and will devise an appropriate set of induction activities which will normally include, but is not limited to:
- Orientation within the Department(s) and the University (e.g. location of offices of key staff, location of notice- boards, photocopier, Library and Computing Services, the Union of Brunel Students; Sports Centre, other University facilities)
  - An Introduction to the Graduate School
  - An induction tour of the Library
  - Introduction to the University's computing network and its resources
  - Meetings with supervisors, other research teams and other staff and researchers (particularly the postgraduate researcher representatives) in the Department
- 7.3 There will also be a detailed discussion with the postgraduate researchers about any technical aspects of the proposed programme of work; health and safety; ethics and research integrity and the arrangements for facilities to be made available. Where necessary, risk assessment training should be provided for postgraduate researchers at an appropriate stage.
- 7.4 At College level, induction events are organised normally three times in each academic year. These events typically focus on College-specific information and advice. These may also be supplemented by additional events at Departmental level.
- 7.5 The [International Student Services team](#) can provide special support and advice for overseas postgraduate researchers on arrival.

- 7.6 At University level, The [Graduate School](#) Induction introduces postgraduate researchers to the support it provides and introduces them to the wider community of researchers within the University. Cohort inductions are delivered at least once in each term of the year to coincide with programme entry points. Information can be found via the student intranet pages and on [Inkpath](#) – the University’s web and app-based researcher development system.
- 7.7 The 4-week review (see section 9) will consider an induction checklist to ensure that postgraduate researchers have attended, or are scheduled to take part in, appropriate induction events and activities. It is also an opportunity for postgraduate researchers to discuss any further requirements with their supervisory team.
- 7.8 The PGR Programmes Office should inform key University contacts of the arrival of new postgraduate researchers, including, but not limited to, the Academic liaison librarian; PGR Director, College Research Manager and the Graduate School.

### **Responsibilities of Postgraduate Researchers**

- 7.9 As part of induction, postgraduate researchers need to be made aware of their responsibilities whilst a registered at the University. These include to:
- Taking active responsibility for their own personal and professional development
  - Maintaining (a joint responsibility with supervisory teams) regular contact with supervisors
  - Engaging fully with progression and annual reviews
  - Setting and keeping to timetables and deadlines, including planning and submitting work and maintaining satisfactory progress with their research
  - Making supervisors aware of any specific needs or circumstances likely to affect the progress of their work
  - Attending any development opportunities (research-related and other) and training that have been identified as part of their supervisory meetings and progression/annual reviews
  - Adhering to the University’s regulations, policies and guidance

## **8 Ethics and Research Integrity**

- 8.1 All staff and postgraduate researchers have a responsibility to observe and maintain the highest standards of conduct in their research. The University’s [Research Integrity Code of Practice](#) draws together the principles and supporting policies that apply to the ways in which research at the University is planned, conducted, interpreted and disseminated. This includes guidance and policy relating to Research Ethics, Research Data Management, Open Access and Publication and Authorship. The University’s [Procedure for Investigation of Research Misconduct](#) clearly outlines the steps to be taken in the event of a case occurring. Postgraduate researchers should discuss research integrity and practice with their supervisory team in the first instance. Further information and training is available through Departments/Colleges and from the Graduate School.

## Research Ethics and Research Data Management

- 8.2 Research Ethics and Research Data Management must be considered during research planning, to ensure that the research complies with relevant regulatory requirements and ethical standards. Further information will be provided to postgraduate researchers by Departments and supervisory teams, and is also available from the University's Governance and Secretariat Office.
- 8.3 Any research which uses human participants, the collection or study of their data, and/or the use of their organs and/or tissue, requires research ethics approval. An application should be made to the relevant Brunel Research Ethics Committee (REC) in good time, before the study commences. Researchers must await final approval from the REC before commencing recruitment or data collection. Conducting such research without ethical approval is a breach of University policy and, in some cases, national legislation. The University publishes a [Code of Research Ethics](#), which all Brunel researchers are expected to abide by, alongside the Research Integrity Code.
- 8.4 The University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) oversees all matters pertaining to the ethics of research conducted by Brunel University London staff, students and postgraduate researchers which involves human participants, their tissue and their data. It works to embed a culture, awareness and understanding of ethics in research within the University, including training in research ethics. UREC devolves powers down to three College Research Ethics Committee (CRECs) and applications will be reviewed by members of the appropriate REC, depending on the affiliation of the applicant and the nature of the research. Some research will require approval by other bodies, such as the NHS Research Ethics Committee or other collaborating national/international partner. These considerations should be made *before* any research is undertaken.
- 8.5 There are also many other instances where approval for undertaking particular research is required; for example, research which includes radiation or animal experimentation.
- 8.6 Research data generated by postgraduate researchers should be managed in accordance with the University's policies, procedures and standards, and statutory and funder requirements. The University publishes a [Policy for Research Data Management](#), which is part of the Research Integrity Code of Practice.

## 9 Research and Skills Training

- 9.1 The importance of developing research and other transferable skills during a research degree programme is well recognised by a range of stakeholders, including research funders, employers and graduates themselves. These skills can help to facilitate timely and successful programme completion, improve the quality of research outputs and impact, contribute to future employability and to continuous personal, professional and career development.
- 9.2 Postgraduate researchers are expected to take responsibility for shaping, managing and directing their research training (taking advice from their supervisory team and other relevant advisors). [The 3D Researcher Development Tool©](#) has been developed by the University to provide a common framework to support all Brunel postgraduate

researchers to reflect upon, plan and document their development as researchers. All new postgraduate researchers must undertake a self-evaluation using the 3D Tool within 4 weeks of their initial registration. Compulsory and recommended training, including if applicable in-session English, will be agreed at the postgraduate researchers 4-week review and may be agreed at any further reviews. Every postgraduate researcher must document relevant training or development activity for each sub-category of the Brunel 3D Researcher Development Tool © over the course of the research degree.

- 9.3 The University recognises that postgraduate researchers will have individual development needs, which will vary depending on their research background, their individual research focus and career aspirations. However, the University also recognises that there are some fundamental skills which they should be supported to develop during the different stages of their programme. The University has therefore agreed mandatory training requirements for postgraduate researchers in their first year and this includes a Research Integrity online course and associated Health and Safety training. Research Methods training, including methods for conducting a literature review, will be provided either via a bespoke training course within the Department/College (if available) and via blended learning; or online delivery. Further information can be found on the [Researcher Development pages](#). In addition, all postgraduate researchers are required to complete the [Research Integrity on-line course](#).
- 9.4 All postgraduate researchers involved in supporting teaching must complete appropriate training prior to commencement of their duties. The training requirements are set out in the [Policy for the Employment of Postgraduate Researchers in Supporting Teaching and Learning](#). Postgraduate researchers can access formal training in learning and teaching via the [Academic Professional Development Unit](#).
- 9.5 A wide range of training workshops and developmental opportunities are provided at Departmental, College and University level to support researchers in the achievement of their agreed developmental objectives. The University's Researcher Development Programme, coordinated by the Graduate School, includes the annual Researcher Development Series (which all postgraduate researchers are strongly encouraged to attend) as well as an extensive programme of workshops and a portfolio of online courses. Researcher development opportunities are aligned to the nationally-recognised [Researcher Development Framework](#) in addition to the categories of Brunel's 3D Researcher Development Tool©. Details of the programme can be found on the [Your Training and Development PGR page](#) and via [Inkpath](#). The Graduate School also offers one-to-one training and development advice and specialist careers support by appointment.
- 9.6 English language support is provided by the [Brunel Language Centre](#). Pre-sessional English language courses are provided as well as courses designed to improve general and academic English whilst studying. The identification of any need for English language support is an important part of supervisory meetings with postgraduate researchers.
- 9.7 Postgraduate researchers are important members of the University's academic community. Part of researcher training is to build effective networks with other researchers within and outside the subject area. As such, postgraduate researchers are expected to participate in activities such as Departmental seminar programmes

where visiting speakers and Brunel staff discuss their research and the latest developments in the field.

- 9.8 Postgraduate researchers are also strongly encouraged to present their own research findings to their peers. Within the University opportunities to practice research dissemination, receive developmental feedback and network with other researchers include departmental seminars and research student conferences, College research student conferences and the University's annual [Research Student Conference](#).
- 9.9 Postgraduate researchers are also encouraged to present at external conferences; funding may be available within Colleges to support this or postgraduate researchers can apply for a Vice Chancellor's Conference Prize via the Graduate School, which provides funding competitively on the basis of research excellence.
- 9.10 In addition, the University provides opportunities to hear leading researchers within Brunel describe their contributions to knowledge in their field. Postgraduate researchers are encouraged to attend such events, even if they are outside their specialist area. These events prove an opportunity to share in the successes of other researchers and may provide inspiration.

## 10 Supervision

### **Appointment of Supervisory Teams**

- 10.1 Each postgraduate researcher shall be assigned a supervisory team by the Head of Department or their nominee before an offer of a place on a research degree programme is made.
- 10.2 Supervisory Teams will be appointed on the basis of their expertise and experience (see below), and will not necessarily be restricted from a role simply due to the time they have been employed by the University.

### **Composition of Supervisory Teams**

- 10.3 Supervisory teams shall consist of:
- **A Principal Supervisor** - with main responsibility for the postgraduate researcher.
  - **A Second Supervisor** - an additional member of academic staff who will work with the Principal Supervisor to provide supervisory support for the postgraduate researcher.
  - **A Research Development Advisor (RDA)** - a member of staff who will provide research development advice and support.
- 10.4 The details and requirements for each member of the supervisory team are presented below.



## **Principal Supervisor**

10.5 The Principal Supervisor should:

- Typically hold a PhD
- Have appropriate expertise in the postgraduate researcher's field of research
- Be 'research active' according to the disciplinary norms
- Normally have previous experience of a successful PhD supervision, as a Principal Supervisor or a member of a supervisory team.

10.6 It may be appropriate to appoint a Principal Supervisor without experience of previous supervision. However, in such cases, the Second Supervisor must have had considerable experience in order to provide an appropriate balance and careful consideration should be given to the number of supervisees which would be appropriate.

## **Second Supervisor**

10.7 The Second Supervisor should ideally hold a PhD, and be a member of the University's academic (on a Teaching and Research or Education or Professional Practice contract) or research staff with appropriate expertise; or recognised by the University to supervise research students (recognised supervisors – see below).

10.8 The Second Supervisor works and meets with the Principal Supervisor and the postgraduate researcher to provide guidance, support and feedback on the research project.

## **Research Development Advisor (RDA)**

10.9 The RDA may be one of the supervisors or a separate member of staff. If the RDA is appointed as additional to the supervisory team, the RDA role can be fulfilled by academic staff, research staff, or relevant professional staff who wish to be involved in research degree supervision and as an opportunity for further development.

10.10 The role of the RDA is to support the postgraduate researcher's broader development as a researcher, and their career development. The RDA works with the postgraduate researcher to identify the skills they will need to complete their research degree, and to pursue their desired career, signposting relevant opportunities and [tailored careers support for researchers](#). This engagement with the postgraduate researcher is in addition to the supervision of the research being undertaken.

10.11 RDAs should be familiar with the training opportunities available in their Department/College, and the training and support provided by the Graduate School. The RDA should also be familiar with sector expectations around researcher development, including the Vitae Researcher Development Framework, and with discipline-specific training and development opportunities outside of the University.

10.12 The Graduate School provides guidance and support for RDAs through regular development sessions, as well as online resources and guides. New RDAs are encouraged to speak to more experienced RDAs in their departments, and to foster an ongoing relationship with their postgraduate researchers.



- 10.13 It should be noted that it is an expectation of the Researcher Development Concordat (2019) that postgraduate researchers are supported in their professional development, and the University is a signatory of this concordat.
- 10.14 In addition to the careers support for researchers available via the Graduate School, postgraduate researchers may benefit from careers advice from those who are recent PhD graduates (for example post-doctoral researchers) or those who have followed non-academic post-doctoral career paths (eg. In professional roles).

### **The Supervisory Process**

- 10.15 All supervisors should be members of the University academic staff or recognised by the University to supervise postgraduate researchers. Staff on research-only contracts are eligible to act as supervisors, dependent on the nature and length of the contract and level of experience. All members of the supervisory team are expected to work together to provide appropriate support for the postgraduate researcher and should, between them, have appropriate subject expertise and experience of supervising those registered for a postgraduate research degree. The names of the supervisory team will be recorded in SITS.
- 10.16 Departments should give careful thought to the makeup of the supervisory team for each postgraduate researcher to ensure an appropriate coverage of topic, methodology, transferable skills training, and a balance of expertise and experience. Consideration should also be given to factors such as any potential conflicts of interests and continuity of support (ie. known issues such as planned retirements).
- 10.17 In addition, recognised supervisors, who are not members of Brunel staff, may be appointed to supervisory teams. Recognised supervisors must be approved by the University, following a case being made for their appointment by the College through the University's [Policy for Appointing Recognised Supervisors / Recognised Teachers](#).
- 10.18 As per the [Policy for Admission and Management of Postgraduate Researchers Studying in Off-campus Mode](#), it may be appropriate for local recognised supervisors to be appointed for those studying off-campus, in addition to an existing supervisory team as defined above. In appropriate circumstances, recognised supervisors may be appointed by the University for postgraduate researchers studying on-campus; for example, to add specific expertise to the supervisory team; or in cases where a Brunel supervisor leaves the University, (where they may be appointed to continue to act as a member of the supervisory team until the research is complete). Recognised supervisors will not normally be appointed as Principal Supervisors. Supervisors are expected to engage regularly with supervisory practice development opportunities, within the University and within the sector, and new supervisors are encouraged to complete the University's online course on [Supervising Doctoral Studies](#).
- 10.19 Requirements for supervision of postgraduate researchers located away from the University are set out in a [separate policy regarding the admission and management of research students registered off-campus](#).
- 10.20 Industrial/specialist advisors may also be involved in providing support to postgraduate researchers, particularly in cases where the research is being carried out in an industrial setting. Such advisors provide support which is complementary to that being

provided by the supervisory team and may focus on advice and guidance on the practical work being undertaken. It is good practice for supervisory teams to liaise with such industrial advisors to clarify the role they will play in relation to supporting the researcher.

- 10.21 In the case of industry-based postgraduate researchers studying as part of an approved partnership, the roles of the supervisory team and industrial advisors will be defined, noting that ultimate responsibility for supervision and the monitoring and review rests with the University. Such a definition may include, but is not confined to, matters such as: the academic and industrial objectives of the project; arrangements for discussions between the supervisory team, industrial advisor and the researcher; any role which the industrial advisor may have in providing formal feedback for use in progress reviews; any training being provided in the industrial setting.

### **Changes to Supervisory Teams**

- 10.22 In cases where a Principal Supervisor leaves the University, the Head of Department or designate should appoint another Principal Supervisor having considered the views of the postgraduate researcher and other members of the supervisory team. This may be another member of the existing supervisory team. Where appropriate and feasible, the possibility of the Principal Supervisor becoming a Recognised Supervisor will be considered. It may be the case that the postgraduate researcher wishes to register at an institution to which the Principal Supervisor has moved. In such cases, the Department will take such action as necessary to facilitate this. As guidance, those who are within a year of submission would normally remain at Brunel, whereas those who are at an early stage of their research may choose to follow their supervisor to another HEI. However, in all cases, the most appropriate solution will be determined in consultation with the postgraduate researcher.
- 10.23 It is essential to the success of postgraduate researchers that they establish good working relationships with the supervisory team and that this relationship encompasses personal wellbeing as well as their academic progress and professional development. The Graduate School offers regular workshops on working effectively with supervisors and can also offer one-to-one advice, and signpost additional support for mental health and wellbeing.
- 10.24 Where a postgraduate researcher or member/s of the supervisory team has difficulty in establishing or maintaining such a relationship, this should be drawn to the attention of the PGR Director or where appropriate, the Head of Department in the first instance. Additional support and/or a change of supervisory team members may, if deemed necessary, be arranged with the agreement of all parties. Postgraduate researchers may also approach the Deputy Dean (Academic Affairs) through student representative structures if necessary, to resolve problems regarding the quality of the support provided that cannot otherwise be resolved. If the postgraduate researcher feels unable to approach staff within the Department or College, it is possible to seek the advice of the [Advice and Representation Centre](#) which is an independent service run by the Union of Brunel Students. There is also a mediation service which can be offered as part of the [complaints procedure](#).

- 10.25 Changes to supervisory team members must be recorded on SITS. This ensures that records are kept up-to-date. Reasons for the change must be included.

### **Responsibilities of Supervisory Teams**

- 10.26 Supervisory teams are responsible for providing guidance on:
- The nature of research in the discipline concerned
  - The standard of work expected in relation to the qualification aim
  - Adhering to the Code of Practice for Research Degrees
  - The planning of the research programme, to meet the expected submission deadline
  - Sources, methods and techniques, and specialist research skills required
  - Possible career options and if relevant networking contacts
  - The development of professional skills
  - Health and safety
  - Ethics, intellectual property, research integrity and the implications of research misconduct
  - The drafting of the thesis
  - The revisions and/or corrections which may be required as a result of examination outcomes
- 10.27 Members of Supervisory Teams, including those acting in the role of RDA, should be familiar with the University's Code of Practice for Research Degrees; the Brunel 3D Researcher Development Tool©; the University's Code of Research Ethics and Research Integrity Code; and Senate Regulations. The RDA should, in particular, be fully aware of the training and development opportunities offered within their own Department and College and with the University's Researcher Development Programme. The RDA should be familiar with sector expectations around researcher development including the Vitae Researcher Development Framework and with discipline-specific training and development opportunities outside of Brunel, or be able to signpost to advice accordingly.
- 10.28 Members of Supervisory Teams are expected to engage in regular continuous professional development in relation to their roles and the University's Performance Development Review (PDR) process provides the opportunity for all staff to reflect on and discuss their development needs.
- 10.29 Regular meetings and contact between postgraduate researchers and the supervisory team are important to ensure that adequate guidance and support is provided and that their progress is appropriately reviewed. Good quality supervision helps to ensure high quality research training, and also maximise successful submission of a thesis by the expected date.
- 10.30 Postgraduate researchers are encouraged to write regularly throughout their research degree and seek regular supervisory feedback on their written work.
- 10.31 It is important that postgraduate researchers and supervisors communicate clearly regarding the expectations in relation to feedback on written work. These discussions should ensure that expectations regarding the timing of submission of the work and provision of feedback are agreed.

- 10.32 When postgraduate researchers submit short pieces of work to their Principal Supervisor/Supervisory Team, they should normally be provided with written feedback within a maximum of two weeks. Examples of short pieces of work may include: thesis chapters or sections of chapters; development of the research proposal; ethics approval; applications for travel grants; or short journal articles.
- 10.33 Written feedback on longer pieces of work submitted to their Principal Supervisor/Supervisory Team should normally be provided within a maximum of four weeks. Examples of longer pieces of work may be: the whole thesis; large sections of thesis; or longer journal articles.

### **Supervision Meetings**

- 10.34 Postgraduate Researchers are encouraged to meet with their supervisors regularly throughout their registration. One of these supervision meetings must be formally recorded every 6 weeks for postgraduate researchers on all modes of study. In addition to this, there should be at least two meetings per academic year between the Postgraduate Researcher and all members of their supervisory team.
- 10.35 Formally recorded supervision meetings may be used as 'contact points' to monitor the engagement of Tier 4/sponsored postgraduate researchers, to satisfy Home Office visa sponsorship requirements.
- 10.36 The expectation is that these meetings, where possible, will be face-to-face, unless there are exceptional circumstances which prevent this. In such cases the meetings may be carried out by other means, but the process described below must be followed.

### **Process and Preparation for Formally Recorded Supervisor Meetings**

- 10.37 Formally recorded supervisor meetings are managed via the MyResearch facility in eVision. Meeting dates are calculated by eVision and may be changed by supervisors or the College PGR Office if there is an appropriate reason for doing so, for example illness of the postgraduate researcher or supervisor, or another unforeseen emergency.
- 10.38 Prior to a formally recorded supervisor meeting, the postgraduate researcher should access the appropriate eVision task and enter a summary of progress, any challenges and proposed targets for the next period. Supplementary information can also be uploaded via the eVision task if appropriate to help inform the meeting, which may include draft work for review. Supervisory meetings are also an opportunity for postgraduate researchers to raise and discuss any academic (including technical problems) or personal challenges which may be having an impact on the progress of their research, and which may need to trigger instigation of support from appropriate services within the University.
- 10.39 Meetings should result in a mutually agreed report which records:
- Points discussed
  - Evaluation of progress since last meeting (strengths and areas to develop)

- Agreed actions, targets and deadlines
- How any academic or personal challenges affecting progress may be mitigated or resolved

10.40 Within the eVision task supervisors must also record:

- Whether or not the postgraduate researcher attended the meeting including, if known, the reason(s) for non-attendance
- Which members of the supervisory team attended

10.41 A formally recorded supervision meeting is not complete until both the postgraduate researcher and supervisor have completed the task in eVision. If the eVision task is not completed during the meeting, postgraduate researchers and supervisors should complete it within five (5) working days of the date of the meeting.

### **Monitoring Formally Recorded Supervisor Meetings**

10.42 PGR Managers, on behalf of the Deputy Dean (Academic Affairs) will monitor postgraduate researcher and supervisor engagement with the above process and refer matters to PGR Directors where appropriate.

## **11 Progression through the Research Degree**

11.1 Ongoing monitoring of progress is essential to encourage timely submission and to ensure appropriate levels of support for postgraduate researchers throughout their registration. The schedule of monitoring described in this document aims to create a balance between supportive, developmental review and more formal progression steps. The design is intended to be as light touch as possible in terms of the demands on postgraduate researchers and staff, while maintaining sufficient rigour to enable the University to be confident that postgraduate researchers are receiving appropriate guidance and support on their progress, and to identify any issues or concerns in a timely manner.

11.2 Documentation for progression reviews should be uploaded by the postgraduate researcher 1 week before the meeting. Progression Panels should confirm the outcome of the progression review no later than two weeks after the meeting.

11.3 At specific Progression Reviews, the postgraduate researcher must demonstrate engagement and progress with the ethical approval process ([BREO](#)) where applicable (see “Ethics and Research Integrity” Section).

### **Progression for Doctoral Awards**

11.4 Table 2 specifies the progression requirements of those registered for a doctoral award. Please note that for professional doctorates and the Brunel Integrated PhD programme specification may define different timescales for the reviews.

11.5 The areas that are grey shadowed are not applicable for a particular mode of study.

- 11.6 A postgraduate researcher should have the documentation they submit for progression reviews checked for similarity with published works on at least one occasion

**Table 2: Progression for Doctoral Awards**

MOA/When		Who	Purpose	Documentation (Uploaded to eVision)
Full Time	Part Time			
1 month (4 weeks from actual date of registration)		Supervisory Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet Principal Supervisor, 2nd Supervisor, RDA and Industrial Advisor/External Supervisor, if appointed</li> <li>Ensure postgraduate researcher is engaging with their studies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research (Project) Plan (up to 2,000 words)</li> <li>3D Researcher Development Plan</li> <li>Induction Checklist</li> </ul>
9 months	18 months	Progression Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formal check of progress</li> <li>Formal check that ethical approval has been obtained (as required).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progress report</li> <li>Updated 3D Researcher Development Plan</li> <li>Substantive written work (as defined by the College)</li> <li>Evidence of completing the Research Integrity online course</li> <li>Evidence of completing College/Department research methods training</li> </ul>
20 months	30 months	Progression Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formal check of both progress and plan to meet expected submission date.</li> <li>Formal check that ethical approval has been obtained (as required).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progress Report</li> <li>Updated 3D Researcher Development Plan</li> <li>Thesis Plan</li> <li>Draft thesis chapter(s) or equivalent report</li> </ul>
	42 months			
	54 months			
30 months	66 months	Progression Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formal check of both progress and plan to meet expected submission date.</li> <li>Formal check that ethical approval has been obtained (as required).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progress Report</li> <li>Updated 3D Researcher Development Plan</li> <li>Updated Thesis Plan</li> <li>Draft thesis chapter(s) or equivalent report</li> </ul>
36 months	72 months	<b>EXPECTED SUBMISSION</b>		

	78 months	Progression Panel	Formal check of both progress with thesis write up and plan to submit by maximum period of registration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Progress Report</li><li>• Updated Thesis Plan</li><li>• Draft Chapter(s)</li><li>• Updated 3D Researcher Development Plan</li></ul>
40 months	90 months	Progression Panel	Formal check of both progress with thesis write up and plan to submit by maximum period of registration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Progress Report</li><li>• Draft Thesis</li><li>• Updated 3D Researcher Development Plan.</li></ul>
48 months	96 months	MAXIMUM PERIOD OF REGISTRATION		
Mock viva should take place close to or after submission of the thesis and prior to examination				

### Progression for Research Masters Awards

- 11.7 Table 3 specifies the progression requirements of those registered for a full or part-time research masters (e.g. MPhil) award.
- 11.8 The areas that are grey shadowed are not applicable for this particular mode of study.
- 11.9 A postgraduate researcher should have the documentation they submit for progression reviews checked for similarity with published works on at least one occasion

**Table 3: Progression for Research Masters**

MOA/When		Who	Purpose	Documentation (Uploaded to eVision)
Full Time	Part Time			
1 month (4 weeks from actual date of registration)		Supervisory Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet Principal Supervisor, 2nd Supervisor, RDA and Industrial Advisor/External Supervisor, if appointed</li> <li>Ensure postgraduate researcher is engaging with their studies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research (Project) Plan, up to 2,000 words</li> <li>3D Researcher Development Plan</li> <li>Induction Checklist</li> </ul>
9 months	18 months	Progression Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formal check of both progress and discuss plans to meet expected submission date.</li> <li>Formal check that ethical approval has been obtained (as required).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progress report</li> <li>Updated 3D Researcher Development Plan</li> <li>Thesis Plan</li> <li>Draft Chapter(s)</li> </ul>

	30 months		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Formal check of both progress and plans to write-up</li><li>• Formal check that ethical approval has been obtained (as required).</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Progress report</li><li>• Updated 3D Researcher Development Plan</li><li>• Updated Thesis Plan</li><li>• Draft Chapter(s)</li></ul>
18 months	36 months	EXPECTED SUBMISSION		
20 months	42 months		Formal check of both progress with thesis write-up and plan to submit by end of maximum registration period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Progress Report;</li><li>• Updated 3D Researcher Development Plan;</li><li>• Updated Thesis Plan;</li><li>• Draft Thesis;</li></ul>
24 months	48 months	MAXIMUM PERIOD OF REGISTRATION		
Mock viva should take place close to or after submission of the thesis and prior to examination				

#### 4-Week Review

- 11.10 The 4-week review enables the postgraduate researcher to formally meet all members of their supervisory team (principal supervisor, second supervisor, RDA, and industrial/specialist advisors if applicable) to talk through their research plans and discuss their development needs. It also represents an opportunity to discuss research ethics and data management plans (where applicable to the research topic). The 4-week review forms an important part of the induction checklist, and this checklist should be completed in preparation for the review. It is an opportunity for the postgraduate researcher to discuss their experience of induction and any additional needs, as well as acting as a review of any issues arising from the induction process.
- 11.11 The date of the 4-week review will be determined by the postgraduate researcher's registration date, as identified in eVision.
- 11.12 For details on the documentation required for the 4-week review, please see the Progression Tables above.
- 11.13 Formally, this review enables the University to ensure that the postgraduate researcher is engaging with their studies, meaning that should they not engage with the review, they may be de-registered. De-registration under these circumstances will not take place until reasonable attempts have been made to contact the postgraduate researcher. De-registration will still occur if the postgraduate researcher has attended other meetings/events/induction sessions, but the 4-week review has not taken place.
- 11.14 Reviews will not normally be delayed by more than two weeks.

#### Progression Reviews

- 11.15 For details of Progression Review timings and documentation to be submitted for each, please see the tables above.



### **Progression Panel Composition**

- 11.16 Progression Panels are appointed by the Head of Department or designate (usually the PGR Director) to undertake the progression reviews. Panels are made up of three individuals:
- A Chair, who should be the PGR Director or their nominee
  - Two independent research-active members of academic staff
- 11.17 Any member of staff regularly involved in the supervision of a postgraduate researcher's work, including their RDA, cannot be a member of their Progression Panel.
- 11.18 The Principal Supervisor may attend at the invitation of the postgraduate researcher but must not be part of the decision-making.
- 11.19 Where appropriate, The Panel may consult with the supervisory team regarding the postgraduate researcher's progression.
- 11.20 All members of the progression panel are involved in determining the recommended outcome of the review.

### **Purpose**

- 11.21 Progression Reviews are held at key points during the lifecycle of a postgraduate researcher to formally consider progress and plans for them to meet the expected date of submission of their thesis. They also confirm the continued registration for the intended award and provide an independent check of progress and targets.

### **Process**

- 11.22 The postgraduate researcher will be invited to formally present their work to the Panel and answer questions regarding their work and progress.
- 11.23 On the basis of the submitted documentation, presentation and oral examination, the Panel will assess the postgraduate researcher against the following criteria:
- The postgraduate researcher is able to:
    - Demonstrate an appropriate level of engagement with research training and personal development activities
    - Articulate a clear research question which, if appropriately investigated, should allow the postgraduate researcher to make a meaningful contribution to knowledge of the discipline within the required period
    - Demonstrate critical engagement with relevant research literature to inform and justify the refinement of their research topic and approach
    - Articulate and justify an appropriate and achievable approach to conducting their research and provide evidence for an appropriate level of competence in, and understanding of, relevant research techniques and methodologies

- Produce a piece of academic writing which is indicative of their potential to produce a successful written thesis within the required period
- 11.24 The Panel will review the status of the research in relation to ethical approval. If data collection has commenced and the collection of such data requires ethical approval, the Panel will determine if appropriate steps have been taken to obtain the approval/ensure it is up-to-date.
- 11.25 In the event that ethical approval has not been obtained/is not up-to-date, and data collection requiring ethical approval has commenced, the Panel will report the matter to the relevant Research Ethics Committee and a research misconduct investigation will take place. The consequences of collecting data without requisite approval can be serious and will include, as a minimum, destruction of the relevant data and potential disciplinary action. The Panel will not recommend a progression outcome until such time as the matter is resolved.

### **Outcomes**

- 11.26 The Panel will determine the postgraduate researcher's progression or otherwise.
- 11.27 The Panel will recommend one of the following outcomes:
- Progress on intended degree programme
  - Provisionally progress. The panel will set targets for the postgraduate researcher to complete and will re-review their progress against these targets, normally within three months (full-time) /six months (part-time). The panel may consult with the supervisory team in setting the targets.
  - Re-grade to an MPhil from a PhD
  - Re-grade to a PhD from an MPhil (by exception)
  - Required to withdraw
- 11.28 The Panel will provide written feedback to the postgraduate researcher via the Panel report form following the progression review. The Chair of the Progression Panel is responsible for ensuring that the report is completed correctly and in a timely manner.
- 11.29 Where appropriate and in order to provide support, Progression Panels may indicate to the researcher the potential outcome, at the Panel meeting, rather than requesting them to wait for an outcome via e-vision.
- 11.30 Should the Panel's recommendation be to withdraw, re-grade or provisionally progress, it will be referred to the Deputy Dean (Academic Affairs) for formal approval.
- 11.31 Should the postgraduate researcher wish to appeal the outcome of the Progress Review, they should follow the University's [Academic Appeals process](#).

### **Provisional Progression**

- 11.32 Once a postgraduate researcher successfully meets the targets set for their provisional progression, their next progression review will typically be at the next normal month as presented in the Progression for Doctoral Awards table.
- 11.33 Where a postgraduate researcher has not met the targets of their provisional progression, the Panel will determine the most appropriate outcome, these being:
- Re-grade
  - Withdrawal
  - A further and final instance of provisional progression for that progression point. If progression is not subsequently confirmed, a Panel must consider re-grade or withdrawal.
  -
- 11.34 Where a postgraduate researcher has multiple instances of provisional progression across different progression points, their supervisor should refer them to Student Wellbeing for support and guidance.
- 11.35 Where a Panel recommends a regrade to an MPhil, the postgraduate researcher's maximum period of registration will be updated to reflect the period of registration for an MPhil. Where a postgraduate researcher has already exceeded the maximum period of registration for an MPhil, the Panel will recommend an appropriate deadline for submission based on their evaluation of progress; this should not normally be less than six months or more than 12 months from the date of the review. When setting deadlines, Panels should give consideration for any requirement for the postgraduate researcher to leave and then return to the country, due to visa requirements.
- 11.36 At the 40 month review, where a Progression Panel feels that a PGR needs more time, a Panel may suggest that the PGR consider applying for an extension. They must, however, inform the PGR that approval of such a request rests with the College's Deputy Dean Academic Affairs.

### **Progress Reviews at other stages**

- 11.37 Progress reviews involving a progression panel may be instigated in other circumstances outside of the normal timings indicated in the tables above. Such reviews may be arranged in circumstances such as:
- Where there are serious concerns about progress and for which the independent view of a panel is required
  - Potential upgrades
  - Prior to a request for early submission (i.e. before the minimum period of registration)
  - Upon return from periods of abeyance. This is important to ensure the postgraduate researcher is assisted by the setting of targets upon return to study, and is supported to submit within the remaining period of registration

## 12 Preparation and Submission of Thesis

- 12.1 The thesis is the presentation of original work by the postgraduate researcher. Whilst the supervisory team offers guidance before the submission of the thesis, the ultimate responsibility for the content must rest with the postgraduate researcher.
- 12.2 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 not empowered to, and should not attempt to, predict the outcome of assessment of the thesis. This judgement can only be made by Examiners.
- 12.3 Senate Regulation 5 specifies that the thesis must have been completed during the candidature with the University, and under supervisory arrangements approved by the University. Work carried out prior to registration, or for another degree, may not be included in the thesis except under exceptional circumstances, such as the transfer of registration from another university. Prior publication by the candidate and their supervisor(s) of papers or patents arising from the research being undertaken will not prejudice the assessment of the thesis by the Examiners. All work that is not the candidate's own must be clearly described and appropriately acknowledged.
- 12.4 A thesis may be submitted as either a collection of chapters or collection of papers. For both formats, it is essential that the overall thesis forms a cohesive body of work.
- 12.5 The options for thesis structure (either thesis as a collection of papers or as a collection of chapters) should be discussed between the Principal Supervisor and candidate as soon as possible following registration and before the end of the first year of study (pro-rata for part-time registration). This discussion will need to take into account the disciplinary norms and potential for a collection of papers to adequately represent the expected contribution to the field and the future value to the researcher. Subsequently, the decision on the most appropriate thesis structure should be made in sufficient time to allow the postgraduate researcher to submit by their expected submission date.
- 12.6 Processes for supervision, progression and examination will be identical for both thesis formats, as well as the expected submission dates and maximum registration periods.

### **Thesis as a Collection of Chapters**

- 12.7 This is regarded as the traditional presentation of a thesis. It comprises a series of chapters describing the aim and rationale for the research, the extant knowledge in the area of study, the methodology, and the results and contribution in detail. All work that is not the candidate's own must be clearly described and appropriately acknowledged. There is no expectation that the research has been written up for publication, however if the thesis includes material contained in papers published by the candidate, these must be acknowledged in the text.

### **Thesis as a Collection of Papers**

- 12.8 A thesis as a collection of papers allows the candidate to structure their thesis around a number of academic papers, which provides the following opportunities:

- The research is written up as the PhD proceeds, reducing the need for a long period of consolidation at the end of the programme
  - Selecting and writing for target journals and responding to reviewers' comments provides additional opportunities to improve their writing skills
  - Postgraduate researchers may be better prepared for their examination if they had to address feedback from external peer review
  - Postgraduate researchers may graduate with published/accepted papers on their CV, adding to their competitive advantage in the job market
- 12.9 Please note that postgraduate researchers who are sponsored, in receipt of a research grant or studentship, or undertaking their research degree as part of a collaborative partnership, may need to obtain written confirmation from the sponsor that submission by collection of papers is acceptable, and the University cannot be held responsible if the sponsor does not recognise this format.
- 12.10 Candidates must investigate any requirements from any funder for research to remain embargoed, which may affect the ability to submit the thesis as a collection of papers and/or publish papers. It is the responsibility of the postgraduate researcher and Principal Supervisor to ensure that the chosen structure of the thesis does not breach any confidentiality, patent laws or any other relevant terms and conditions of sponsorship.
- 12.11 Postgraduate researchers are not required to submit comments of peer reviewers or proof of acceptance for publication for any papers. However, the status of any paper should be stated in the thesis submission.
- 12.12 A thesis as a collection of papers may not be appropriate for projects where publishable results come towards the end of the three-year period. There should therefore be an early discussion about the most appropriate thesis structure between the postgraduate researcher and Supervisory team (see above).
- 12.13 The following points concerning authorship of papers should be noted:
- The status of each paper included in the thesis (i.e. in terms of published, accepted, in review, etc.) should be made clear
  - The candidate should normally be the lead author of the paper, and certainly a significant author in that they must have made a substantial contribution to any jointly authored paper
  - The candidate should include in the thesis a statement outlining his or her specific contribution to any jointly authored paper that is included, indicating what components of the work were carried out by the candidate and what components were carried out by other authors, and indicating the estimated percentage contribution made by the candidate - this statement should be approved by the supervisor before being included in the thesis
  - Where a paper includes the work of more than one research candidate and both candidates are authors on the paper, then both candidates can submit the paper as part of their theses provided that they have both made a substantial individual contribution and that they indicate what their explicit contribution was

### **Thesis Guidance**

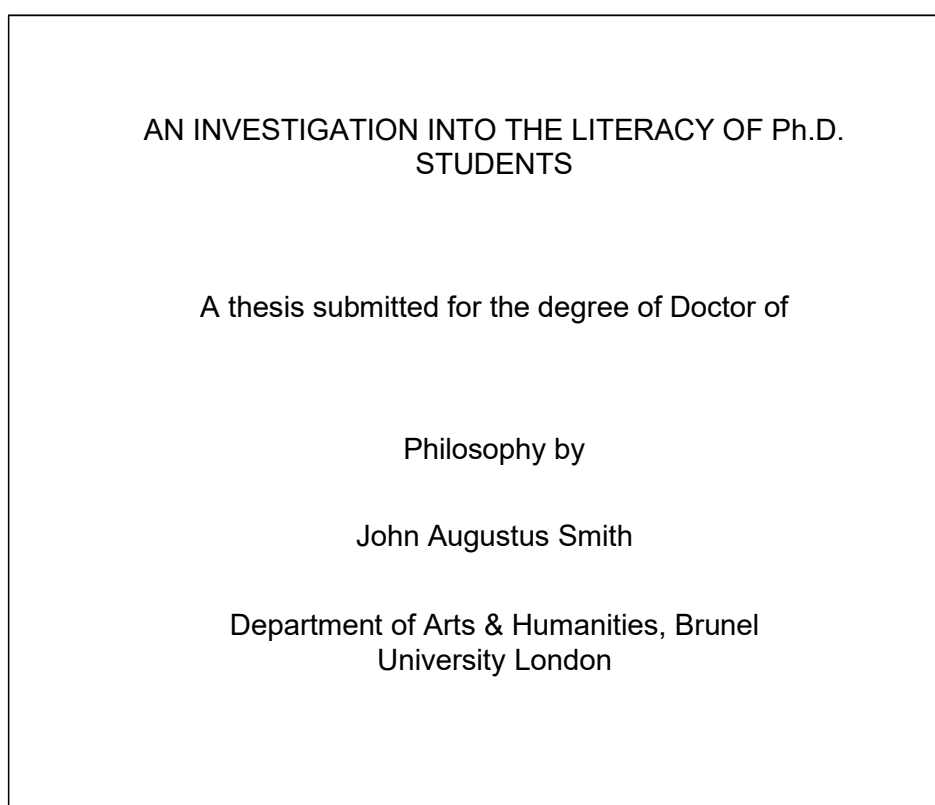
- 12.14 The University publishes information regarding plagiarism and good academic practice and supervisory teams must ensure that postgraduate researchers receive appropriate

advice and guidance throughout their study. It is advisable to undertake training in antiplagiarism prior to the start of writing the thesis. The available courses can be found in Inkpath. All theses will be checked for similarity with published works.

- 12.15 University guidance is that the length of a PhD thesis will not normally exceed 100,000 words, and an MPhil thesis will not normally exceed 60,000 words. It is left to the supervisory team or the department to guide the postgraduate researcher regarding the appropriate length or typical word count and/or page limit for the thesis, which will be determined by the subject-matter and topic. The thesis should be as concise as is consistent with a full description of research. Examiners may require an overly long thesis to be condensed.
- 12.16 The thesis must be in English and of publishable quality.

### **Presentation of Thesis – Thesis as a Collection of Chapters**

- 12.17 The order of the introductory pages of the thesis should be: title page, abstract, contents.
- 12.18 The thesis must be produced using 1.5 line spacing, with 1-inch margins and Arial 11 or 12 font size (or similar).
- 12.19 The title page must be laid out as in the following example:



- 12.20 Following the title page, an abstract of no more than 300 words should be included. The format and content of the abstract will be advised by the Supervisory team.

- 12.21 The use of a referencing system is discipline specific and the most established referencing system in the research area is advisable. Postgraduate researchers should seek guidance from their supervisors.
- 12.22 The remaining formatting and the overall structure of the thesis has to be agreed with the Supervisory team.
- 12.23 The University may publish the final version of the thesis and an abstract in the open-access repository unless there is an embargo period.

### **Presentation of Thesis – Thesis as a Collection of Papers**

- 12.24 A typical format of a thesis as a collection of papers might be as follows:

Abstract:	As outlined below in 'Presentation of Thesis'
Introduction:	A concise introduction to the aims of the research, the key research questions being addressed, and how these are addressed in the papers which are included in the thesis.
Literature Review:	An extensive review of the key background literature and how they leads into the PhD project. (The Introduction and Literature Review could be merged into a single section, particularly when a significant amount of literature is reviewed in the papers that are included in the thesis).
Papers:	The normal expectation is that there would be at least three papers included, but the exact number will be determined by the scale of the papers, in terms of the amount and significance of the research included, and the nature of the discipline. Candidates should seek their supervisors' advice in relation to this. Each paper would normally comprise a separate section. Papers may be published, in revision, or submitted. However, it is preferable for at least one to be published or accepted for publication. Should there be any need for additional discussion of the material in the papers this can be included at the end of the relevant section or included in the final section.
Conclusions and Discussion:	This should summarise and critically discuss the main findings of the research, consider the theoretical and practical implications of the work and how it advances the field, and set out suggestions for future work.

### **Process for Submission**

- 12.25 When the postgraduate researcher is nearly ready to submit, they should send a final draft to the Principal Supervisor who will conduct a least one full (and final) review of the entire thesis. The postgraduate researcher and the principal supervisor should agree the timeframe for this review.
- 12.26 It is a requirement that all theses are put through plagiarism checking software and this is facilitated through the postgraduate researcher's Postgraduate Office. This step must be undertaken well in advance of the expected submission date and at least two weeks prior to formal submission. It is most important that this step is taken well in advance of the end of the maximum period of registration. Should the outcome of first examination be re-examination following revisions within 12 months, the revised thesis should be put through the plagiarism checking software service prior to formal re-submission. Plagiarism checking software compares work with other sources and produces an originality report, highlighting where matches have been found and the source of the match.
- 12.27 The postgraduate researcher must follow the instructions for uploading the thesis. The Principal Supervisor will evaluate the report, and any issues of plagiarism or copyright will be required to be addressed by the postgraduate researcher before submission of the thesis.
- 12.28 Postgraduate researchers should submit the electronic copy of the final version of their thesis for examination via the online submission system or to a central collection point in their College, as per the advice provided by their PGR Office. In the case of a re-examination, candidates are required to submit the thesis as per the initial submission process.
- 12.29 As part of the submission process, candidates are asked to declare that the thesis is their own original work; that the research was conducted in accordance with the University Code of Research Ethics; and that they have completed any compulsory training requirements associated with their programme of study.
- 12.30 College PGR Offices will ensure that the candidate's submission is recorded. The College arranges for the thesis to be shared with the examiners following their formal appointment by Senate.

### **Mock Vivas**

- 12.31 All postgraduate researchers must be offered, by their Principle Supervisor, the opportunity to undertake a 'mock viva', organised by the Department. The format of the mock viva should be a simulation of a real viva and is therefore not a 'coaching' session. The precise format and duration of a mock viva are left to Departments to determine, but would usually involve a member, or members, of the supervisory team.
- 12.32 The purpose of a mock viva is to provide the postgraduate researcher with the opportunity to experience the viva examination format. It is not therefore meant to provide a detailed or accurate indication of the specific questions which will be posed at the actual viva, or to provide any indication of the viva outcome.



- 12.33 In disciplines which typically ask for an introductory presentation to be made as part of the viva voce examination, this may form part of the mock viva process.
- 12.34 Candidates should also be encouraged to participate in other opportunities which may be provided by the University/College/Departments in preparation for the viva voce examination.

## 13 Examination

### **Role of Internal and External Examiners**

- 13.1 The role of the Examiners is to ensure that a thesis meets the requirements of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, as set out in [Senate Regulation 5](#).
- 13.2 Examiners are appointed for the entire examination process, which includes any re-examination.

### **Process and Requirements for Appointment**

- 13.3 [Senate Regulation 5.25-5.29](#) details the criteria for Examiner and Independent Chair appointments.
- 13.4 Where the candidate is a current or recent member of staff (please see Senate Regulation 5.26 for definitions) they must be examined by at least two External Examiners and one Internal Examiner. Please note that this requirement does not apply to graduate teaching assistants and/or demonstrators, or roles undertaken via the University's Job Shop.
- 13.5 Immediately following the final annual review, the Principal Supervisor (on behalf of the Supervisory Team) should approach potential External and Internal Examiners and Independent Chairs informally with a view to them being nominated to conduct the examination of the thesis.
- 13.6 In order to appoint an Examination Panel, the [Research Degrees – Appointment of Examiners Form](#) must be completed, signed by the Deputy Dean (Academic Affairs) and submitted to [external@brunel.ac.uk](mailto:external@brunel.ac.uk) for approval on behalf of Senate, together with a curriculum vitae of the proposed External Examiner, a minimum of 12 weeks before the expected submission date. This period is required to allow for all the necessary checks, including the suitability of examiners and for appointment packs to be sent out.
- 13.7 It must be ensured that there is an appropriate balance of experience across the Examination Panel. The CV of the potential External Examiner must demonstrate previous experience of research degree supervision and/or examination. Should the proposed External Examiner lack significant experience, a strong case needs to be made for their appointment and evidence provided of how the Panel as a whole will be able to discharge its duties. Quality Assurance will seek approval of the Examination Panel on behalf of Senate.

- 13.8 Colleges should not propose Internal Examiners who have been part of the candidate's supervisory team at any stage.
- 13.9 Internal Examiners will normally have acted as part of a supervisory panel before being asked to act in this capacity.
- 13.10 Independent Chairs must be permanent members of academic staff of the University with experience of supervision and examining of research degrees, and knowledge of the University's Senate Regulations and the Code of Practice for Research Degrees. The Independent Chair must not have been involved in the supervision of the candidate. It is not necessary for the Independent Chair to be a subject expert.
- 13.11 Careful thought should be given to whether there are any actual or perceived conflicts of interests in relation to those being proposed as examiners/chairs for examinations. If members of staff are aware of any potential for a conflict of interest, they should declare this at an early stage.
- 13.12 Examination Panels, including the Independent Chair, are appointed for the entire examination process, which includes any re-examination(s).
- 13.13 Once approved, Quality Assurance will be responsible for sending out appointment letters and other information to the Examination Panel. Candidates and Principal Supervisors are also contacted by Quality Assurance confirming the appointments.
- 13.14 Upon appointment, Quality Assurance provides the Examination Panel with the relevant Senate Regulations.

### **Examination Process**

- 13.15 [Senate Regulations 5.30 – 5.32](#) set out the regulatory requirements of the examination of research degrees.
- 13.16 The examination of the thesis is deemed to have commenced once the thesis is submitted to the University, and to have been completed when the recommendation of the Examiners has been accepted by the University.
- 13.17 The thesis, as submitted, is confidential to the Examiners and should therefore not be shared with any party not involved in the examination.
- 13.18 Theses will typically be provided to examination panels electronically. Where required Departments will print and send a hard copy of a thesis to an External Examiner.

### **Preliminary Reports**

- 13.19 Each External and Internal Examiner shall complete a preliminary written report, which should be sent to the College in advance of the viva, or, in cases where a viva is not to be held, prior to the determination by the Examiners of their recommendation.

- 13.20 Senate Regulation 5.32 stipulates the requirements relating to the length and content of the preliminary reports.
- 13.21 Examiners' preliminary reports must not mention the possible outcome of the examination, but address the issues identified in Senate Regulation 5.32.
- 13.22 The purpose of the preliminary report is to address the strengths and weaknesses of the thesis and indicate the main lines of enquiry to be followed in the viva voce. Preliminary reports should be between 300 and 500 words in length and must be signed and dated before the viva voce examination (or meeting of Examiners to examine a thesis where no viva voce is to be held) and circulated in advance to the other Examiner(s) and Independent Chair.
- 13.23 Preliminary reports are required for all research degree examinations, including thesis re-submission within 12 months for re-examination.
- 13.24 Preliminary reports are issued to the candidate when the examination is complete, as part of the formal notification by the University of the outcome. However, it should be noted that prior to the examination, preliminary reports are confidential to the Examination Panel and should therefore not be shared with the candidate or their supervisors prior to them being formally issued to the candidate by the University. Preliminary reports are provided to postgraduate researchers for information and should not be relied upon to form part of the feedback regarding any revisions required to their thesis following examination.
- 13.25 Preliminary reports must be retained with the final report of the examiners to ensure that a complete record of the examination process is held.

### **The Viva Voce**

- 13.26 Candidates for research degrees will normally be required to present themselves for a viva voce examination within three months of the date of submission of the thesis. The date for the viva voce shall be arranged by the supervisor in consultation with all concerned, and Colleges are responsible for confirming the date and venue of the viva voce. Viva voce examinations will normally be held at the University or on a campus of an associated institution, or can be conducted online if necessary.
- 13.27 No members of the candidate's supervisory team shall be present at the viva voce examination unless formally invited to attend by the candidate using the [Attendance of Supervisor at Viva Voce Examination](#) form. Following receipt of the form, the Independent Chair is informed that one member of the supervisory team will be present at the viva voce. He/she may not play a part in the viva voce. The viva voce shall otherwise be held in private in the presence of the Examiners and Independent Chair.

### **Introductory/overview Presentations at Viva Voce Examinations**

- 13.28 In some disciplines, it is common practice as part of viva voce examinations for Examiners to ask candidates to begin with an introductory presentation providing an overview of their thesis. This can be seen as a formalisation of the typical viva practice where Examiners often begin with an open question asking the candidate to

summarise their work. Where there is a disciplinary expectation or norm that the viva voce will begin with a presentation using slides or other visual aids:

- This should be clearly highlighted to candidates as part of the support that they receive from their supervisory team in preparing for the viva voce
- Supervisory team or department/division-level advice should be provided to support the preparation of appropriate materials and content
- Any such presentations should normally be kept brief (normally 5 – 10 minutes) with the majority of time left to focus on the in-depth discussion led by the examiners
- The Chair and all Examiners must be notified in advance of the viva voce examination that an introductory presentation (supported by slides or other visual aids) will be made at the start of the examination and how long this will be

- 13.29 Examiners cannot ask for a presentation with slides or visual aids during the course of the viva voce if this has not been discussed and agreed in advance. It should also be noted that candidates are not assessed on the quality of introductory presentations where these are made. Rather these can help to set the context for the in-depth discussion which, along with the thesis, form the basis of the examiners' decision making.

### **Role of Independent Chair**

- 13.30 The role of the Independent Chair is to ensure that all procedures and regulations are adhered to throughout the examination, including the timely production of the Examiners' report. Chairs must therefore ensure they are fully conversant with the University's Regulations and the Code of Practice for Research Degrees. Regular training for Independent Chairs, both for those with experience and those new to the role, is provided by the University.
- 13.31 The Independent Chair must not influence the outcome of the examination. They are not expected to have read the thesis prior to the examination, and may not ask any questions of the candidate. They should be present throughout the viva voce, including at the preliminary meeting of the examination panel. This preliminary meeting is required and acts as an opportunity for the examiners to identify the lines of questioning, based upon their reading of each other's preliminary reports; and for the Chair to establish the protocols to be followed.
- 13.32 The Chair should be informed of any adjustments which may have been agreed for the candidate and also of any special requirements the candidate may have notified to the PGR Programmes Office.
- 13.33 At the viva voce examination, the Chair must:
- Introduce the members of the Examination Panel and the candidate
  - Explain how the viva will be conducted, including, where appropriate, the formal presentation by the candidate
  - Remain present for the entire viva voce examination, including when the postgraduate researcher is provided with feedback by the Examiners regarding the outcome
  - Ensure the viva voce is conducted fairly by:

- ensuring the candidate has the opportunity to demonstrate what they know – i.e. that open-ended questions are asked;
- ensuring the candidate has time to answer questions;
- maintaining a respectful, disciplined discussion;
- remaining aware of the environment in which the viva voce is being conducted and ensuring adequate breaks are prompted where necessary
- Make contemporaneous notes of the viva process, to record any unusual circumstances, note start and finish times etc - these notes are not a full record of the content of the viva voce
- Draw the proceedings to a close and explain the next steps

13.34 At the end of the oral part of the examination, the candidate shall retire from the examination room, together with the supervisor if in attendance. The Examiners shall discuss and agree the feedback to be given to the postgraduate researcher and the outcome of the examination. The candidate is then invited back into the examination room to receive feedback and be informed of the outcome of the viva.

13.35 Examiners must provide their joint written report and submit it to the College PGR Programmes Office at the earliest opportunity and preferably immediately following the examination using the appropriate proforma. The Independent Chair will ensure that all processes are followed correctly and that the report is completed and signed following the examination. The Chair should check that all written feedback to the postgraduate researcher is provided as part of the report of the Examiners, including any detailed written information on recommended revisions to their thesis. It is advisable for computer facilities to be made available by the College in the viva voce venue, to enable the report to be produced on the day of the examination. This ensures timely formal notification of the outcome to the postgraduate researcher. Examiners may, in addition, make separate written statements on any matter concerned with the examination if they so wish.

13.36 The Independent Chair must complete the report of the Chair and submit it to the College office.

### **Outcomes of Examination**

13.37 Senate Regulations set out the various recommendations which examiners may make following the examination as follows (Senate Regulation 5.34).

- a) *Where all the Examiners are in agreement that the thesis does not meet the standards for the award and that the degree not be awarded, in exceptional circumstances, they may make a recommendation to that effect without requiring the candidate to defend the thesis in a viva voce.*

**Additional information – recommendation a)**

Should Examiners wish to recommend that the thesis is of an unacceptable standard to be examined for a research degree, the preliminary report must be submitted at least two weeks prior to the planned viva voce examination. The Independent Chair must, in such instances, ensure that a joint report is produced by the Examiners recommending that there be no award and no viva voce examination. Should preliminary reports be received after the two-week deadline, the viva voce examination must go ahead in order that the postgraduate researcher is not informed at very short notice that the viva voce is to be cancelled.

- b) *If the thesis meets the standards for the award, and the candidate has satisfied the Examiners at the viva voce examination, the Examiners may recommend the award of the relevant degree.*
- c) *If the thesis meets the standards for the award but requires minor amendments and if the candidate satisfies the Examiners in all other parts of the examination, the Examiners may, in writing, require the candidate to make such amendments to the thesis as will satisfy them within a maximum period of six months. Extensions to the maximum amendment period may be approved by the College if there are accepted extenuating circumstances. The examiner(s) will normally complete the review of the amended thesis within 20 working days of the re-submission.*
- d) *If the thesis does not meet the standards for the award, the Examiners may allow the candidate the opportunity to resubmit the thesis in a revised form for re-examination within twelve months, with a further viva voce examination. Exceptionally, where the Examiners, following receipt of the revised thesis, agree the re-submitted thesis meets the required standard, and where they were satisfied with the candidate's performance in the viva voce in the first examination, the Examiners may determine that a second viva voce is not required. Extensions to the twelve-month period may be approved by the College if there are accepted extenuating circumstances. The examination of the revised thesis will normally be completed within three months of the re-submission.*
- e) *In the case of a viva voce for a doctoral award, if the thesis is judged by the Examiners to be of an insufficient standard for a doctoral award, the Examiners may allow the candidate the opportunity to be re-examined, with a further viva voce examination on a resubmitted thesis, following appropriate revisions, for the award of a research masters, within six months. Exceptionally, where the Examiners, following receipt of the revised thesis, agree the re-submitted thesis meets the required standard for a research masters, and where they were satisfied with the candidate's performance in the viva voce in the first examination, the Examiners may determine that a second viva voce is not required. Extensions to the six-month period may be approved by the College if there are accepted extenuating circumstances. The examination of the revised thesis will normally be completed within three months of the re-submission.*

**Additional information - recommendations c), d) and e)**

Colleges/Departments may issue separate guidance about the presentation of amendments.

The Deputy Dean (Academic Affairs) may approve an appropriate extension to the amendment period on the basis of extenuating circumstances.

It is acceptable for the examiners to agree that the Internal Examiner will be solely responsible for reviewing the amendments and determining if they have met the requirements of the examiners, to allow the postgraduate researcher to be awarded. The review of the amended thesis will normally be completed within 20 working days of the re-submission by the postgraduate researcher.

If a postgraduate researcher requires further clarity on required revisions or amendments, they are advised to contact their internal examiner in the first instance (who may liaise with the External Examiner(s) if needed). The postgraduate researcher should make their Supervisor(s) aware of any such communications. The focus of any such contact should be solely on clarifying the meaning of what has been stated/resolving any ambiguity in wording. Advice and support on how to effectively address the examiners' required amendments should be sought from the supervisory team, not from the examiners, and examiners must never be approached to provide academic guidance or further support.

- f) *If the thesis is judged by the Examiners to have met the standards for the award, but the candidate fails to satisfy the Examiners at the viva voce examination, the candidate may be allowed to re-submit the same thesis for re-examination at a second viva voce examination within three months.*
- g) *The Examiners may, upon consideration of the thesis and the candidate's performance at the viva voce, make the recommendation that the degree not be awarded.*

- 13.38 Following examination, the candidate will receive a letter informing them of the outcome. Such communication must include the report of examiners and their preliminary reports. Reports of examiners must include any details of amendments or revisions which may be required. Principal Supervisors will receive a copy of the letter, reports of examiners and details of required revisions.

## 14 Following Award

- 14.1 Postgraduate researchers who have been awarded must provide an electronic copy of their thesis to the University's Library prior to the award certificate being produced, to enable it to be deposited on the Brunel University Research Archive (BURA).
- 14.2 The Brunel University Research Archive (BURA) is the institutional repository containing the University's open access research outputs. The service enables a worldwide audience to find, read and download material for non-commercial private study or research purposes. It is a requirement that all theses are supplied for inclusion

in BURA. Information about BURA and advice about copyright, as well as frequently asked questions can be found on the [BURA webpage](#).

- 14.3 Should postgraduate researchers or supervisors wish the University to hold the thesis under confidential cover (for example to protect intellectual property; pending publication; controversial or sensitive material) for a period of time (up to a maximum of three years), this can be requested and needs to be agreed by the candidate and the Principal Supervisor. The College will submit the request to the Library using the appropriate form which is available from the Library, along with a step-by-step guide. The Library will keep a record of the agreement. If a further period of confidentiality is requested, this will need to be considered and, where appropriate, approved, by the Provost, who may seek the view of the appropriate Vice-Dean (Research). The Library should be contacted in relation to such requests.
- 14.4 It is traditional academic practice for postgraduate researchers to present their Principal Supervisor with a bound copy of the thesis in acknowledgement of their input and help.

## **15 Representation and Feedback**

- 15.1 Postgraduate researchers have the opportunity to be represented on relevant Committees at University, College and Departmental level via the student representative structures.
- 15.2 Appropriate bodies, such as Student Experience Committees, are established in each College to enable postgraduate researchers to discuss matters with academic staff to ensure that there is an effective two-way channel for formal communication. Such bodies have the responsibility for informing postgraduate researchers of the actions taken to address matters raised. These bodies are an integral part of the University's procedures for assuring academic standards and enhancement.
- 15.3 The Union of Brunel Students represents those registered for postgraduate research degrees and publishes information regarding the representative structure on its website.
- 15.4 The University may conduct periodic surveys of postgraduate researchers to help it evaluate and enhance provision.

## **16 Changes to Registration Status, Abeyance, and Extensions**

- 16.1 Any changes to registration, abeyance, or extensions should coincide with an informal wellbeing check between the postgraduate researcher and their supervisor. The changes described below are initiated by the postgraduate researcher and processed through the "MyResearch" facility in eVision. A full justification for such requests needs to be provided, with evidence where appropriate. Supervisors should provide a justification for their recommendation to the authorised member of staff



defined below, who must also provide a justification for the decision. Staff are encouraged to use reasonable discretion and to prioritise the postgraduate researcher's wellbeing when reaching these decisions.

### **Abeyance Procedure**

- 16.2 It is possible that postgraduate researchers may require time off from their studies. This might result from a change in personal circumstances, caring needs, temporary disruptions to the feasibility of their research plans, and other problems. This might include, but not be limited to: illness of any kind, family planning, childcare, elder care, grief, treatment, or the sudden inaccessibility of research resources. Abeyance is not intended to be used for research projects which have fallen behind schedule due to neglect or circumstances within the postgraduate researcher's control. The University will comply with statutory requirements in relation to, for example, maternity and paternity leave.
- 16.3 Postgraduate Researchers should first discuss their intention with their supervisor. If there is disagreement between the Postgraduate Researcher and their supervisor regarding the abeyance request, the associated PGR director or any other independent (non-supervisory) member of academic staff should preside and mediate with consideration to the postgraduate researcher's wellbeing. Staff are encouraged to use reasonable discretion when agreeing abeyance, and to allow postgraduate researchers to explain and justify the length of abeyance they need as a starting point. In rare cases, evidence of this change in circumstance may be required by the Associate Dean (Student Experience) prior to approval. When Abeyance is approved, the postgraduate researcher's period of registration will be extended accordingly (ie, a 3-month abeyance will lead to a 3-month extension to that deadline).
- 16.4 A period of abeyance may be required to support an opportunity for the postgraduate researcher's professional development. For example, if they go on a longer placement relevant to their research or career, or if they need a period of knowledge transfer leave (such as secondment to an external organisation which requires their expertise).
- 16.5 Should postgraduate researchers request periods of abeyance beyond the period normally allowed by Senate Regulation 5.12, the approval of the Chair of the University Education Committee must be sought. It is important that the Principal Supervisor and the Associate Dean (Student Experience) are involved in considering such cases to ensure that appropriate discussions are taking place with the student regarding their circumstances. Such consideration may need to take into account the University's Senate Regulations in relation to, for example, [Extraordinary Support to Study](#) and any possible impact on the currency of the research following any lengthy periods of abeyance.
- 16.6 Postgraduate researchers returning from periods of abeyance must have a formally recorded re-entry interview with their whole Supervisory Team, within a maximum of four weeks, as well as a progression review (as defined in section 9 above) within three months of that interview. Respectively, these meetings should plan and then verify successful return to study and re-engagement with the research.
- 16.7 Abeyance taken by externally or internally-funded postgraduate researcher should be taken with due consideration to the funder's terms, but without allowing funders or external stakeholders to influence that decision. All abeyance decisions are academic

and pastoral in nature. When decided, funders or other stakeholders may be notified when appropriate and with consideration for the postgraduate researcher's privacy.

### **Changes to Mode of Attendance**

- 16.8 Notification of changes to mode of attendance should be processed via the 'MyResearch' facility in eVision. Approval to move from full-time to part-time mode of study should be based on a genuine and unexpected change in circumstances, and the best interests of the postgraduate researcher's wellbeing and project success. If there are any concerns at the time of registration as to a postgraduate researcher's ability to undertake full-time studies then they should be registered part-time.
- 16.9 Please also see [Policy for Admission and Management of Postgraduate Researchers Studying in Off-campus Mode.](#)

### **Extensions to Maximum Period of Registration**

- 16.10 It is not anticipated that extensions to the maximum period of registration will be granted, apart from in the most exceptional of circumstances. Such extensions will require the explicit recommendation of the Deputy Dean Academic Affairs of the college and subsequent approval of the Provost.

### **Withdrawals**

- 16.11 Withdrawals **which are initiated by the postgraduate researcher** and not the result of progression reviews are notified and processed via the 'MyResearch' facility in e-vision.

## **17 Assuring the Quality of Research Degree Programmes**

- 17.1 Senate **Regulations** form the University's regulatory framework within which standards are defined and assured. [Senate Regulation 5](#) applies to Research Degrees.
- 17.2 The governance structure of the University ensures that matters relating to the quality and standards of Research Degrees are considered. The University's governance structure and the terms of reference and membership of the various Committees are set out in [Senate Regulation 1](#).
- 17.3 **Annual Monitoring:** Each Department considers its PGR provision according to the University's [Annual Monitoring of Postgraduate Research Degrees Procedure](#). This provides an opportunity for Colleges and Departments to reflect upon provision and support for postgraduate researchers and to consider enhancements. Senate reviews data related to research degrees on a regular basis.
- 17.4 **Reports of Examiners:** Examiners are asked to report that they are satisfied that the candidate should be awarded based upon a number of specified criteria which assure the standards of the award. Examiners also have the opportunity to comment on the examination process.