



Code Of Practice for Research Degrees

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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

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 the University is committed to continued enhancement of its research degree provision.

The University offers programmes of research leading to a PhD or MPhil. The University also offers the Brunel Integrated PhD and professional doctorates.

This Code of Practice has been approved by the University Senate. The Code sets out the University's mandatory policies and procedures which amplify and articulate the University's Senate Regulations. [Senate Regulation 5](#) 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.

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 staff involved in supporting them, both academic and administrative. 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.

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 which all providers of research degrees are required to meet.

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.

The Code of Practice will be reviewed regularly through the governance structures of the University to ensure that it remains current.

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

'[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.'

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 holding a European Commission HR Excellence in Research award 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](#).

To celebrate the achievements of research students, the University currently awards a number of prizes, including Vice-Chancellor's prizes for Doctoral Research; Vice-Chancellor's travel prizes; Research Conference Prizes.

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 which provides knowledge and experience and with whom the student is able to meet to discuss progress at regular intervals, and from whom he or she 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 feed back on the supervision and training received.

The University has 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

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 do not count towards this allocation.

Maternity/Paternity/Adoption Leave

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.

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 approved and published [Student Pregnancy and Maternity Policy](#) provides more information.

Reasonable Adjustments

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 student is studying, or during examination.

Involvement in supporting teaching and learning

Opportunities may arise for postgraduate researchers to become involved in supporting teaching and learning. The University publishes [separate policy](#) relating to the principles and procedures applied to such involvement.

3 Expected Submission Dates and Modes of Study

Postgraduate researchers can study for a PhD or MPhil/LLM (by research) 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 published by the University.

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 in order 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.

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. Study for part-timers is not restricted to term-time.

Support is provided to postgraduate researchers to assist them in completing their studies and submitting their thesis on time.

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 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.

Degree and Mode	Minimum period of registration (months)	Expected Submission Date (months)	Maximum period of registration (months) <i>(Students are expected to be in their 'writing up' period if they have not submitted by the expected submission date)</i>
Full-Time			
PhD	24	36	48
MPhil/LLM	12	18	24
EngD/Brunel Integrated PhD*	36	48	60
DrPH	30	36	60

Degree and Mode	Minimum period of registration (months)	Expected Submission Date (months)	Maximum period of registration (months) <i>(Students are expected to be in their 'writing up' period if they have not submitted by the expected submission date)</i>
Part-Time			
PhD	48	72	96
MPhil/LLM	24	36	48
DrPH	48	72	84

**Brunel Integrated PhD was formerly known as New Route PhD*

4 Fees and Funding

Information for applicants regarding the fees the University charges for research degrees can be found via the 'course' pages at <http://www.brunel.ac.uk/courses/pg/postgraduate-fees>. Other matters relating to the charging of fees and financial support can be found at: <https://intra.brunel.ac.uk/Pages/ForStudents.aspx>.

Information regarding possibilities for research scholarships and studentships, as well as information about external sources of funding, can be found at: <http://www.brunel.ac.uk/courses/pg/funding/scholarships-bursaries>.

5 Application and Admission

Entry Requirements and General Principles

The [University admissions policy](#) states that postgraduate researchers are admitted who have the ability to successfully complete their chosen course, whatever their background. The general University entrance requirement for registration for a research degree is normally a First or Upper Second Class Honours degree.

Applicants need to have the necessary background and skills to obtain their research degree and also have determination and an understanding of what is needed to complete the degree on time, including the time and financial commitments required.

The University Admissions Office provides advice on the level of 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.

Information is published by the University to inform applicants for research degrees about the specific requirements for an application to their chosen field.

If applicants are responding to an advertisement for a pre-defined research project being marketed by the University, they will need to provide a personal statement about their suitability.

Applicants applying to undertake their self-defined research topic are normally required to submit a statement (500-1000 words) about the broad area of study they are interested in as part of the application process. The detailed project will subsequently be worked up jointly by the student and supervisors.

Specific information regarding the documents required for submission of an application can be found at: <http://www.brunel.ac.uk/courses/admissions/how-to-apply-for-research-courses>

Applicants are likely to be responding to an advertisement or to be writing speculatively based on their knowledge of the University. It is the responsibility of the Deputy Dean (Academic Affairs) to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to assess applications, conduct interviews and oversee all matters relating to the supervision and assessment of research students.

In certain circumstances, 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.

Admission of research wishing to undertake their studies off-campus is covered in a [separate policy](#), published by the University.

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, students 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 original institution. All other provisions of the Code of Practice would apply to such students.

Application Process

The Departmental PGR Director should give preliminary consideration to 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. The reason for a rejection at any stage must be communicated clearly to the applicant and recorded on the relevant admissions forms.

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. The panel will as a minimum consist of the Departmental PGR Director (or his/her delegated member of staff) and the proposed Principal Supervisor.

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.

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 ;
- the applicant is likely to complete within the expected period of time;
- the statement of research interest is the applicant's own;
- the mode of study (i.e. full-time or part-time) is the appropriate one for the applicant;
- the candidate is appropriately qualified and has the necessary English language skills;
- the supervisor and Department have the requisite knowledge, skills, capacity and resources to provide the appropriate level of support and supervision.

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 his/her studies;
- the applicant's employment commitments, if any, and their possible effect on the decision regarding the appropriate mode of study.

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.

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.

Decisions regarding applications must be returned to the Admissions Office in a timely manner.

Offer

The Admissions Office will issue a student number and formal offer of admission when notified of the decision of the Head of Department. The offer letter contains information about the supervisory team; registration; accommodation; access to facilities and training; fees, funding and prizes and orientation (for international postgraduate researchers). The offer letter will indicate the start date.

Registration

Following acceptance of the offer, postgraduate researchers will receive a welcome letter, which will confirm their start date and include important information about registration and the four week induction review (see section 9). It is important for registration to be completed as soon as possible in order for access to be provided to the full range of University services. Registration (and re-enrolment in subsequent years), involves completing an on-line registration task which covers all the necessary personal information and finance, including details of any sponsoring organisation. It also ensures that any relevant checks (e.g. Visa checks if necessary) have been made. The registration task includes information about the terms and conditions of the registration.

Postgraduate researchers may not normally be registered simultaneously for more than one degree, unless exceptional circumstances apply, for example where there is a request to register for a programme of research before formal confirmation of the award of a taught postgraduate degree is available.

The start date, which must be the first working day in a month, triggers a number of processes, including the regular supervisory meetings and progress reviews (the exception to this is the four-week induction review, which is triggered by the registration date - please see section 9). It also 'starts the clock' in terms of the expected submission date.

6 Induction

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 including:

Departments will arrange to welcome postgraduate researchers and will devise an appropriate set of induction activities which will normally include, but is not confined to: orientation within the Department(s) and the University (e.g. location of offices of key staff, location of notice- boards, photocopier, fax, Library and Computing Services, the Union of Brunel Students; Sports Centre, other University facilities); introduction to the Graduate School; 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. The International Student Services team can provide special support and advice for overseas students on arrival. 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 students at an appropriate stage.

At University level, induction sessions are provided centrally via the Graduate School at regular intervals as part of its core researcher development programme. These 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 within the [Researcher Development Online Portal](#)

At College level, each College organises induction events, normally twice in the academic year. These events typically focus on College-specific information and advice. These may

also be supplemented by additional events at Departmental level.

The 4-week induction 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, to assist in acclimatising them.

The PGR Programmes Office should inform key contacts notifying them of the arrival of new postgraduate researchers, including, but not limited to, the subject liaison librarian; PGR Director and the Graduate School.

Responsibilities of Postgraduate Researchers

As part of induction, postgraduate researchers need to be made aware of their responsibilities whilst a registered student. These include:

- taking responsibility for their own personal and professional development;
- maintaining (a joint responsibility with supervisory teams) regular contact with supervisors;
- engaging fully with progression reviews 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.

Ethics and Research Integrity

All staff and postgraduate researchers have a responsibility to observe 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. Postgraduate researchers should discuss research integrity and practice with their supervisory team in the first instance. Further information and access to training is available through Departments and from the Graduate School.

Research Ethics and Research Data Management

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 students by Departments and supervisory teams, and is also available from the Graduate School.

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. 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 is part of the Research Integrity code.

The University Research Ethics Committee oversees all research ethics matters of research conducted by Brunel University London staff and students which involves human participants, their tissues and their data. It works to embed a culture and awareness of ethics in research within the University, with particular reference to training in research ethics. Some research will require approval by other bodies, such as the NHS Research Ethics Committee.

There are also many other instances where approval for undertaking particular research is required; for example, research which includes radiation or animal experimentation.

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.

7 Research and Skills Training

The importance of developing research and other skills during a research degree programme is well recognised by a range of stakeholders, including research funders, employers and doctoral graduates. These skills can help to facilitate timely programme completion, improve the quality of research outputs, contribute to future employability and encourage continuous personal, professional and career development.

Postgraduate researchers are expected to take responsibility for shaping, managing and directing their research training (taking advice from their supervisory team). [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 complete 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 student's 4-week review and may be agreed at any further reviews. Every postgraduate researcher must document substantive training or development activity for each sub-category of the Brunel 3D Researcher Development Tool © over the course of the research degree.

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 early stages of their programme. The University has therefore agreed mandatory training requirements for postgraduate researchers in their first year, this includes the Research Integrity on-line course plus associated Health and Safety training; Research Methods training, including methods for conducting a literature review, either via a bespoke training course in Department/College (if available); via blended learning; or via on line module only. Further information is contained in the [Researcher Development pages](#).

In addition, all students registering from 1 October 2014 are required to complete the [Research Integrity on-line course](#) and all students registered prior to October 2014 are strongly encouraged to complete the course.

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 <https://intra.brunel.ac.uk/s/beec/acad/Pages/Support-for-postgraduate-students-who-teach.aspx>).

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 research students are strongly encouraged to attend) as well as an extensive programme of workshops and a growing portfolio of online courses. The programme is aligned to the nationally-recognised [Researcher Development Framework](#) as well as to the categories of Brunel's 3D Researcher Development Tool. Details of the programme and a link to online booking can be found at <http://www.brunel.ac.uk/services/graduate-school/training-development-and-support/research-students/researcher-development-programme>

The Graduate School also offers one-to-one training and development advice by appointment and a statistics drop-in clinic in collaboration with the [ASK](#) service. ASK also provides general advice on academic writing and mathematics.

English language support is provided by the International Pathways and Language Centre. Pre-sessional English language courses are provided as well as courses designed to improve general and academic English whilst studying. <http://www.brunel.ac.uk/international/ipic/english-language-courses>. The identification of any need for English language support is an important part of supervisory meetings with postgraduate researchers.

Postgraduate researchers are important members of the University's academic community. Part of research training is to build networks with other researchers within and outside the subject area. Departments arrange programmes of seminars where visiting speakers and Brunel staff discuss their research and the latest developments in the field; postgraduate researchers are expected to attend these and participate in research discussions.

Research students 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](#).

Postgraduate researchers are also strongly encouraged to present at external conferences; limited funding may be available within Colleges to support this or postgraduate researchers can apply for a [Vice Chancellor's Travel Prize](#) which provides funding competitively on the basis of research excellence.

In addition, the University Inaugural and Professorial Lectures provide an opportunity to hear leading researchers within the university describe their contributions to knowledge in their discipline. Postgraduate researchers are encouraged to attend such events, even if they are outside their specialist area: they prove an opportunity to share in the successes of other researchers and may provide inspiration.

8 Supervision

Appointment of Supervisory Teams

Each student 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.

Composition of Supervisory Teams

Supervisory teams shall consist of:

- a) A Principal Supervisor, with main responsibility for the student (**the Principal Supervisor**)

The Principal Supervisor should:

- 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.

It may be appropriate to appoint a Principal Supervisor without experience of previous supervision. However, in such cases, the 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.

- b) A further member of academic staff who will provide supervisory support for the student (**the Second Supervisor**)

The Second Supervisor should:

- Be a research-active member of the University academic or research staff, or recognised by the University to supervise research students (recognised supervisors – see above).
- c) A member of staff who will be assigned the role of **Researcher Development Advisor (the RDA)**. The RDA role can be undertaken by one of the supervisors or by a separate member of staff, who can be a member of University staff who holds a PhD or other doctoral level qualification (see below). RDAs are expected to make themselves familiar with the training opportunities available in the College and centrally from the Graduate School, to attend RDA training within the Graduate School, and to provide support to the postgraduate researcher in relation to their broader development as a researcher and in relation to their career development. This engagement with the postgraduate researcher should be seen as being additional to the supervision of the research being undertaken. It should be noted that it is an expectation of the Vitae Researcher Development Framework and Researcher Development Concordat that doctoral researchers are supported

in their professional development, and Brunel are signed up to both of these.

Should the RDA be appointed as additional to the supervisory team, the RDA role can be used as an opportunity for academic (or research) staff who wish to have a route into research degree supervision and for research and professional staff in the University to enhance their development. Students may benefit from careers advice from those who are recent PhD graduates (for example post-doctoral researchers) or those who have chosen to follow non-academic post-doctoral career paths with their PhD (eg. In professional roles).

All supervisors should be members of the University academic staff or recognised by the University to supervise research students. 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 on SITS.

Departments should give careful thought to the makeup of the supervisory team for each postgraduate researcher to ensure an appropriate coverage of topic, methodological, 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).

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 on the appropriate form. Recognised supervisors must be appointed for those studying off-campus, either in addition to an existing supervisory team as defined above, or in place of a Brunel supervisor. 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.

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](#).

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.

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

In cases where a Principal Supervisor leaves the University, the Head of Department or designate should appoint another Principal Supervisor having taken into account 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.

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.

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](#).

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

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;
- 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.

Members of Supervisory Teams, including those acting in the role of Researcher Development Advisors (RDAs), should be familiar with the University's Code of Practice for Research Degrees; the Brunel 3D Researcher Development Tool© 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. Ideally the RDA will 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 Brunel.

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.

Regular meetings and contact between postgraduate researchers and the supervisory team are important to ensure that adequate guidance and support is provided to students and that student 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.

Postgraduate researchers are encouraged to write regularly throughout their research degree and seek regular supervisory feedback on their written work.

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.

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; short journal articles.

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; longer journal articles.

Supervision Meetings

Formally Recorded Supervision Meetings

There should be a minimum of 8 formally recorded meetings each year, including (pro-rata) during any period of amendments or until re-examination following the outcome of first examination. Formally recorded supervision meetings should therefore take place every 6 (and no more than 8) weeks for students on all modes of study.

Formally recorded supervision meetings may be used as the 'contact points' to satisfy UKVI requirements.

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

Meeting dates are managed via the MyResearch facility in e-vision.

Prior to the meeting, the postgraduate researcher should access the appropriate e-vision task and prepare a summary of progress, any issues and proposed targets for the next period. Supplementary information can also be uploaded via the e-vision 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 any issues which may be having an impact on the progress of their research, such as technical problems, or personal circumstances which may need to trigger instigation of support from appropriate services within the University.

Meetings should result in a mutually agreed report which records:

- points discussed
- evaluation of progress since last meeting (strengths and areas to develop)
- agreed next steps (by whom and with clear timelines for all parties)
- how any identified issues should be resolved

The e-vision task must also record:

- whether or not the postgraduate researcher attended the meeting;
- which members of the supervisory team attended.

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.

Formal meetings with Supervisory Teams

Supervisory teams (all members) must meet with full-time postgraduate researchers formally at 4, 14, 25 and 35 months to discuss progress against targets and development needs. Part-time postgraduate researchers should also meet with their full supervisory teams on an annual basis. These meetings are also an opportunity to discuss training needs and career aspirations (refer to table in section 9).

9 Progression through the Research Degree

Introduction

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.

The table below specifies the main events relating to the progress of those registered for a **full-time doctoral award from 1 October 2014**. Please note that for professional doctorates the programme specification may define different timescales for the reviews.

Months	Event	Who	Purpose	Documentation Required
1 (4 weeks from registration date)	4 Week Induction Review	Supervisory Team	Meeting with Supervisory Team Ensure student is engaging with their studies	Research plan (up to 2,000 words) 3D Researcher Development Plan Induction Checklist
4	Formal Meeting with Supervisory Team	Supervisory Team	Discuss progress against targets; identify issues of concern; discuss training needs and career aspirations	Supervisory records Updated 3D Researcher Development Plan
9	Progression Review	Progression Panel	Determine suitability for PhD registration	Progress report Updated 3D Researcher Development Plan Substantive piece of written work (see below)
14	Formal Meeting with Supervisory Team	Supervisory Team	Discuss progress against targets; development and training needs; career aspirations	Supervisory records Updated 3D Researcher Development Plan

Months	Event	Who	Purpose	Documentation Required
20	Progression Review	Progression Panel	Formal check of progress and discuss plans to meet expected submission date; Confirm PhD registration	Progression report Thesis plan and draft thesis chapter/s (or equivalent report) 3D Researcher Development Plan
25	Formal Meeting with Supervisory Team	Supervisory Team	Discuss progress against targets; development and training needs; career aspirations	Supervisory records Updated 3D Researcher Development Plan
30	Progression Review	Progression Panel	Formal check of progress Against expected submission date Confirm PhD registration	Progression report Updated thesis plan and draft thesis chapters Updated 3D Researcher Development Plan
35	Formal Meeting with Supervisory Team	Supervisory Team	Discuss progress for submission Discuss training needs and career aspirations Instigation of discussion regarding potential examiners	Draft thesis chapters Supervisory records Updated 3D Researcher Development Plan
36	EXPECTED SUBMISSION			
Mock Viva should be arranged to take place following submission of thesis and prior to examination.				
40	Progression Review	Progression Panel	Formal check of progress against submission before registration lapses	Draft thesis
48	MAXIMUM PERIOD OF REGISTRATION			

The table below specifies the main events relating to the progress of students registered for a **part-time doctoral award from 1 October 2014:**

Months	Event	Who	Purpose	Documentation Required
1 (4 weeks from registration date)	4 Week Induction Review	Supervisory Team	Meeting with Supervisory Team Ensure student is engaging with their studies	Research plan (up to 2,000 words) 3D Researcher Development Plan Induction Checklist
4	Formal Meeting with Supervisory Team	Supervisory Team	Discuss progress against targets; identify issues of concern; discuss training needs and career aspirations	Supervisory records Updated 3D Researcher Development Plan

Months	Event	Who	Purpose	Documentation Required
14 Then annually	Formal Meeting with Supervisory Team	Supervisory Team	Discuss progress against targets; development and training needs; career aspirations	Supervisory records Updated 3D Researcher Development Plan
18	Progression Review	Progression Panel	Determine suitability for PhD registration	Progress report Updated 3D Researcher Development Plan Substantive piece of written work (see below)
30 Then annually	Progression Review	Progression Panel	Formal check of progress against expected submission date Confirm PhD registration	Progress report Thesis plan and draft chapter/s (or equivalent report) Updated 3D Researcher Development Plan
66	Progression Review	Progression Panel	Formal check of progress against expected submission date Confirm PhD registration	Progress Report Updated thesis plan and draft chapters 3D Researcher Development Plan
70	Formal Meeting with Supervisory Team	Supervisory Team	Discuss progress for submission Discuss training needs and career aspirations Instigation of discussion regarding potential examiners	Draft thesis chapters Supervisory records Updated 3D Researcher Development Plan
72	EXPECTED SUBMISSION			
Mock Viva should be arranged to take place following submission of thesis and prior to examination.				
78	Progression Review	Progression Panel	Formal check of progress against submission before registration lapses	Draft thesis
90	Progression Review	Progression Panel	Formal check of progress against submission before registration lapses	Draft thesis
96	MAXIMUM PERIOD OF REGISTRATION			

Students registered from 1 October 2014 for a research masters award will be expected to have a four week induction review, a 9 month (full-time)/ 18 month (part-time) progression review and annual progression reviews until submission of a thesis. Formal meetings with supervisory teams should also take place on an annual basis.

Full-time and part-time students registered for a **Doctoral Award** prior to **1 October 2014**

Event	Who	Purpose	Documentation Required
Formal Meeting with Supervisory Team	Supervisory Team	Discuss progress against targets; development and training needs; career aspirations	Supervisory records
Timing		Full-Time 14, 25, 35 months	Part-Time Annually, with a meeting at 70 months
Annual Review	Two independent academic staff and second supervisor	Formal check of progress and discuss plans to meet expected submission date. To confirm registration for intended award	Progress report Thesis plan At 30 months (full-time) and 66 months (part-time) (see timings below) and at any subsequent reviews, the student must also provide a detailed thesis plan and/or draft thesis chapters
Timing		Full-Time Annually, on anniversary of previous review. 30 months 40 months if not submitted by 36 months	Part-Time Annually, on anniversary of previous review. 66 Months 78 and 90 months if not submitted by 72 months
Please note that should a normally scheduled annual review on the anniversary of a previous review fall two months either side of the 30 month or 66 month review, it will not be necessary to hold an additional review.			
Mock Viva should be arranged to take place following submission of thesis and prior to examination			

4 Week Induction Review (for FT and PT postgraduate researchers registered from 1 October 2014)

Purpose

The 4-week induction review enables the postgraduate researcher to formally meet with the full supervisory team to talk through their research plans and discuss their development needs. It also represents an opportunity to raise awareness of the need to develop research ethics and data management plans (where applicable to the research topic). The 4-week review forms an important part of the induction process and an induction checklist will be considered as part of 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. Formally the review enables the University to ensure that the postgraduate researcher is engaging with their studies and is the first formal progression point, meaning that postgraduate researchers can, should they not engage with the review, be de-registered.

Process

The date of the 4-week induction review will be determined by the postgraduate researcher's registration date. The meeting will be notified via e-vision. The postgraduate researcher is required to upload a provisional research plan, which may be a variant of their original research statement submitted as part of their application. The length and scope of the plan will vary by mode of study and discipline and postgraduate researchers may wish to seek advice on this from their Principal Supervisor. Typically they should aim for 1000-2000 words and be able to clearly and concisely articulate:

- the research question to be addressed;
- why it is important;
- methodology to be used;
- timeline.

The postgraduate researcher should also upload the 3-D Researcher Development Plan.

The supervisory team and postgraduate researcher should complete the induction checklist. The meeting date and attendance will be confirmed on e-vision. If the postgraduate researcher does not engage with the review and complete the associated tasks as required, this will be recorded and they will be contacted to inform them that they will be deregistered. De-registration under these circumstances will not take place until reasonable attempts have been made to contact the postgraduate researcher. If there is evidence that they have been engaging in other ways, for example by attending other meetings/events/induction sessions, but the four-week induction review has not taken place, de-registration will only take place if it is clear that the postgraduate researcher is unwilling to engage with the review process. Reviews will not normally be delayed by more than two weeks.

Progress Reviews

Progression Panel Composition

Progression Panels are appointed by the Head of Department or designate (usually the PGR Director) to undertake the progression reviews and annual reviews. Panels are made up of:

- a Chair, who should be the PGR Director or their nominee,
- an independent research-active member of the academic staff
- the student's Researcher Development Advisor (RDA). The role of those acting as RDA in the Panel relates to the assessment of the postgraduate researcher's training and development needs and engagement with such opportunities. The Principal Supervisor may attend at the invitation of the postgraduate researcher, but must not be part of the decision-making.

All members of the progression panel are involved in determining the recommended outcome of the review.

Progression Review: 9 Months (full time); 18 months (part-time)

Purpose

The Progression Review held at 9 months /18 months is a key point during the lifecycle of a postgraduate researcher, which formally considers progress and plans for the postgraduate researcher to meet the expected date for submission of their thesis. This confirms or otherwise the postgraduate researcher's continued status as being registered for their intended award. The progression review can recommend that the postgraduate researcher be:

- required to do further work before a decision can be made regarding their progression (provisional progression);
- downgraded to an MPhil (if on a PhD route);
- upgraded to a PhD from MPhil;
- be required to withdraw.

Process:

The postgraduate researcher should submit the following:

- a progress report, including a statement from the Principal Supervisor
- an updated 3D Researcher Development Plan
- a substantive piece of written work (10,000 – 15,000 words excluding references for those registered for a Doctoral award; 5 – 10,000 words for a research masters) which should typically include a critical review of the literature; proposed methods/approach; results/outcomes achieved to date and proposed further work.
- evidence of ethics approval, where applicable, must also be provided as part of the documentation for the review.

The postgraduate researcher will be invited to formally present their work to the Panel and answer questions regarding their work and progress.

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.

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. In the event that approval has not been obtained/is not up-to-date and data collection requiring ethical approval has commenced, the Panel will normally recommend provisional progression until such time as the matter is resolved, following referral to the Secretary to the Research Ethics Committee.

The Panel will make a recommendation regarding the postgraduate researcher's progression or otherwise. Should the Panel's recommendation be to withdraw, re-grade or provisionally progress the postgraduate researcher's pending further review, the recommendation will be forwarded to the Deputy Dean (Academic Affairs) for their formal decision. In cases where the recommendation is to provisionally progress the postgraduate researcher, a date will be set within three months to re-review the progress against the targets set (see below). The status is updated in SITS following the outcome of the review.

Provisional progression will result in targets to be met. The progress panel may consult with the supervisory team to ensure that any specific targets are defined and recorded in the outcome of the review.

The Panel will provide written feedback to the postgraduate researcher via the Panel report form following the progression review. Should the postgraduate researcher wish to appeal the outcome of the progress review, they should follow the University's [Academic Appeals process](#).

Progression reviews conducted annually (see tables above for timings)

Purpose

Progression reviews are a formal check of progress and help to ensure the postgraduate researcher is being appropriately supported to allow them to meet the expected submission date. They also confirm the continued registration for the intended award and are an independent check of progress and targets.

The progression review can recommend that the postgraduate researcher be:

- required to do further work before a decision can be made regarding their progression (provisional progression);
- downgraded to an MPhil (if on a PhD route)
- or exceptionally, be upgraded from MPhil to PhD or be required to withdraw.

Process

Progression reviews are undertaken by the progression panel on an annual basis, starting at 20 months for full-time students and 30 months for part-time students from the start date, until submission of the thesis. The Principal supervisor may attend at the invitation of the postgraduate researcher, but must not be part of the decision-making.

Documentation to be submitted for progression reviews is detailed in section 9 of this document.

Through the progression review meetings, the Panel will also identify if ethical approval has been obtained. In the event that approval has not been obtained/is not up-to-date and data collection has commenced, the Panel will normally recommend provisional progression until such time as the matter is resolved, following referral to the Secretary to the Research Ethics Committee.

The Panel will make a recommendation regarding progression or otherwise. Should the Panel's recommendation be to withdraw, re-grade or provisionally progress the postgraduate researcher pending further review, the recommendation will be forwarded to the Deputy Dean (Academic Affairs) for their formal decision. In cases where the recommendation is to require the postgraduate researcher to do further work before a decision can be made regarding their progression (provisional progression), a date will be set within three months (for full-time) or six months (for part-time) to re-review progress against the targets set (see below).

Provisional progression will result in targets to be met. The progress panel may consult with the supervisory team to ensure that any specific targets are defined and recorded in the outcome of the review.

Where a progress panel recommends a regrade to an MPhil, the maximum period of registration will be updated to reflect the period of registration for an MPhil. Where the maximum period of registration for an MPhil has already been exceeded 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.

The Panel will provide written feedback to the postgraduate researchers following the review, with a copy kept with the SITS record.

Progress Reviews at other stages

Progress reviews involving the 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 the panel is required;
- Potential upgrades;
- Prior to a request for early submission (ie 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 supported to submit within the remaining period of registration.

Enrolment

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.

10 Preparation and Submission of Thesis

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.

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 predict the outcome of assessment of the thesis. This judgement can only be made by examiners.

Senate Regulation 5 specifies that the thesis must have been completed during the candidature with the University, 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 his/her 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.

Thesis as a Collection of Papers

This format offers a number of advantages for candidates:

- The research is written up as the PhD proceeds, reducing the need for a long period of writing up at the end of the programme.
- They have opportunities to improve their writing skills throughout their programme, including selecting, and writing for, target journals and responding to reviewers' comments.
- They enter the examinations with a body of work that has already been externally peer reviewed.
- They graduate with published papers on their CV, adding to their competitive advantage in the job market.

However, this structure 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 below).

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 this 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 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.

The following points should be noted:

- It is essential that the overall thesis forms a cohesive body of work.
- The status of each paper included in the thesis (i.e. in terms of published, accepted, in review, etc.) should be made clear in the thesis.
- 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 in the above statement what their explicit contribution was.
- There must be a careful discussion and consideration about the format for submitting a PhD by this means at an early stage. This will need to take into account the value of the papers and equivalence to a thesis and value and view of the subject area/sector for this and opportunities for it to be of value to the researcher. This discussion will also need to take into account discipline expectations post-doctorally.

Thesis as a Collection of Chapters

This is regarded as the traditional presentation of a thesis and differs from the above in that there is no expectation that the research has been written up for publication. The 'Papers' sections are replaced by a number of chapters that describe the methodology and results in detail. If the thesis include material contained in papers published by the candidate, these must be acknowledged in the text. 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.

Thesis Guidance

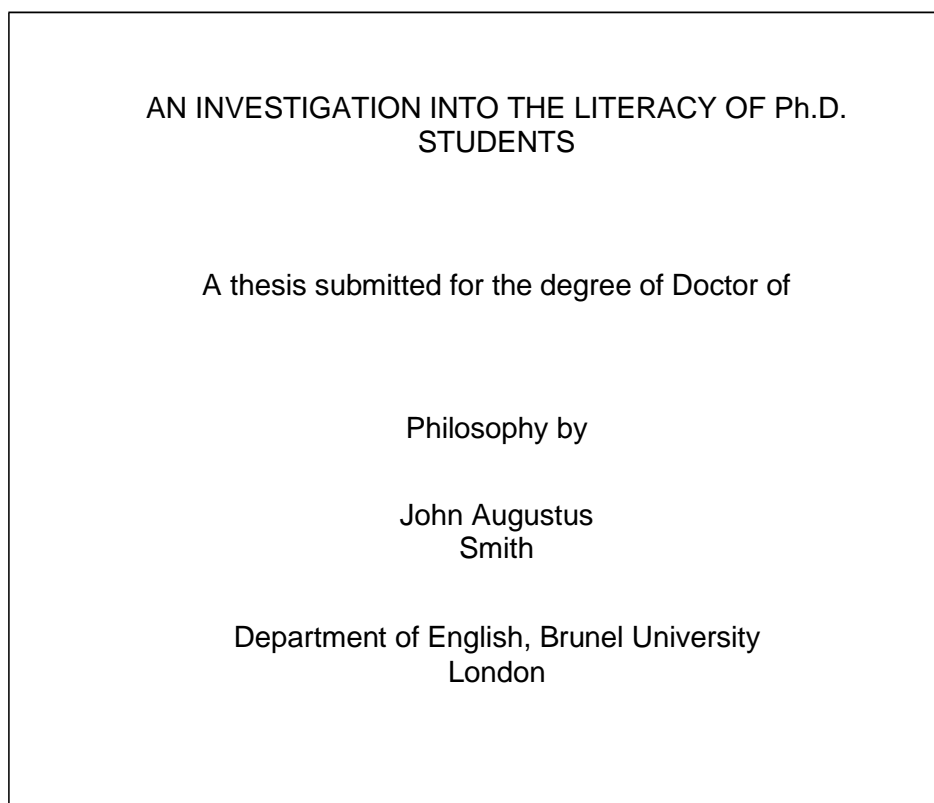
The University publishes information regarding plagiarism and good academic practice and supervisory teams must ensure that postgraduate researchers receive appropriate advice and guidance throughout their study. All theses (and all progression documents) may be analysed for homology with published works. The Library provides information and guidance. University guidance is that the length of theses will not normally exceed 100,000 words. However, it is left to the supervisory team 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. However, the thesis should be as concise as is consistent with a full description of research, and would not normally be expected to be more than 100,000 words in length. 'Local' guidance may be issued regarding thesis length, either by page or word count, but this should not exceed the University-stated maximum. Examiners may require an overly long thesis to be

condensed. The thesis must be in English.

Presentation of Thesis

The order of the introductory pages of the thesis should be: *title page, abstract, contents*.

- The thesis must be produced using 1.5 line spacing, with 1 inch margins and Arial 11 or 12 font size (or similar).
- The title page must be laid out as in the following example:



Following the title page, an abstract of not more than 300 words should be included.

It should be in a form suitable for separate publication and may be edited by the postgraduate researcher's Principal Supervisor. The University may publish the abstract without further reference to the author.

Process for Submission

When the postgraduate researcher is nearly ready to submit, they should send a final draft to the Principal Supervisor for review. It is required that the thesis is put through CheckIt, a thesis checking service provided by the University. 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 CheckIt service prior to formal re-submission. The CheckIt service uses online software to compare work with other sources and produces an originality report,

highlighting where matches have been found and the source of the match. The postgraduate researcher must follow the instructions for uploading the thesis and 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.

Postgraduate researchers should submit three (four for members of staff being examined) soft-bound copies and one electronic copy of the final version of their thesis for examination to a central collection point in their College. In the case of a re-examination, candidates are required to submit the same number of copies of their thesis as above.

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.

College PGR programme teams will ensure that the candidate's submission is recorded. The College arranges for the thesis to be sent to the examiners following their formal appointment by Senate.

Mock Vivas

All postgraduate researchers must be offered the opportunity to undertake a 'mock viva', organised by the Department, following the submission of thesis. 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 arrangements are left to Departments to determine, but would usually involve a member, or members, of the supervisory team.

In disciplines which typically ask for an introductory presentation to be made as part of the viva voce examination, such a presentation should form part of the mock viva process.

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.

11 Examination

Role of Internal and External Examiners

The role of the examiners is to ensure that the thesis meets the requirements of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, as set out in [Senate Regulation 5](#).

Examiners are appointed for the entire examination process, which includes any re-examination.

Process and Requirements for Appointment

[Senate Regulation 5.25-5.29](#) details the criteria for Examiner and Independent Chair appointments.

Senate Regulation 5.26 stipulates that members of staff being examined for a research degree must be examined by at least two external examiners and one internal examiner. Please note that this requirement does not apply to those whose employment at Brunel has been solely within the following categories:

- Roles undertaken via the Job Shop
- Graduate Teaching Assistants and/or Demonstrators

Immediately following the final annual review, the 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.

The appropriate form should be completed, signed by the Deputy Dean (Academic Affairs) and submitted 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 necessary to allow for all the necessary checks, including the suitability of examiners and for appointment packs to be sent out.

It must be ensured that there is an appropriate balance of experience across the examining team. 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. The Student and Academic Services Directorate will seek the approval of the examiners and Independent Chair on behalf of Senate.

Colleges should not propose internal examiners who have been part of the candidate's supervisory team at any stage.

Internal examiners will normally have acted as part of a supervisory team at a HEI before being asked to act in this capacity.

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 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.

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. Therefore if members of staff are aware of any potential for a conflict of interest they should declare this at an early stage.

Examination Panels, including the Independent Chair, are appointed for the entire examination process, which includes any re-examination(s).

Once approved, Academic Services will be responsible for sending out appointment letters and other information to the Examiners and the Chair. Candidates and principal

supervisors are also contacted confirming the appointments. Examination packs contain all relevant information for examiners, including Senate Regulations.

Examiners do not need to be re-approved to conduct a re-examination.

Examination Process

[Senate Regulations 5.30 – 5.32](#) set out the regulatory requirements of the examination of research degrees.

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 have been accepted by the University.

The thesis, as submitted, is confidential to the examiners and should therefore not be shared with any party not involved in the examination.

Preliminary Reports

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.

Senate Regulation 5.32 stipulates the requirements relating to the length and content of the preliminary reports.

Examiners' preliminary reports must not mention the possible outcome of the examination, but address the issues identified in Senate Regulation 5.32.

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.

Preliminary reports must be signed and dated before the viva voce (or meeting of examiners to examine a thesis where no viva voce is to be held) and be circulated in advance, by the College, to the other examiner(s) and Independent Chair.

Preliminary reports are required for all research degree examinations, including thesis re-submission within 12 months for re-examination.

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 students for information and should not be relied upon to form part of the feedback to the student regarding any revisions required to their thesis following examination.

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

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 with all concerned. Viva voce examinations will normally be held at the University or on a campus of an Associated Institution, or can be conducted on-line if necessary.

Where viva voce examinations are undertaken on-line, it should be ensured that an experienced Independent Chair is appointed due to the additional challenges of a virtual examination.

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 appropriate form.

Following receipt of such a 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

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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 student 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 – ie that open-ended questions are asked;
 - ensuring the candidate has time to answer questions;
 - maintaining a smooth, 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.

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 student 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.

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 student is provided as part of the report of the examiners, including any detailed written information to the student 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 student. Examiners may, in addition, make separate written statements on any matter concerned with the examination if they so wish.

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

Outcomes of Examination

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 student 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 extension to the amendment period following College consideration and acceptance of extenuating circumstances.

It is acceptable for the examiners to agree that the internal examiner will review the amendments and determine if they have met the requirements of the examiners, to allow the student 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 student 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 student 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.*

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.

12 Following Award

Postgraduate researchers who have been awarded must provide an electronic copy of

their thesis to the Library prior to the award certificate being produced, to enable it to be deposited on the Brunel University Research Archive (BURA). Prior to uploading onto BURA, the thesis may be put through thesis checking software for copyright/plagiarism checks if not previously done so (see section 10), or where significant revisions have taken place.

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](#).

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.

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.

13 Representation and Feedback

Postgraduate researchers have the opportunity to be represented on relevant Committees at University, College and Departmental level via the student representative structures.

Appropriate bodies (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.

The Union of Brunel Students represents those registered for postgraduate research degrees and publishes information regarding the representative structure on its website.

The University may conduct periodic surveys of postgraduate researchers to help it evaluate and enhance provision.

14 Assuring the Quality of Research Degree Programmes

Senate Regulations form the University's regulatory framework within which standards are defined and assured. [Senate Regulation 5](#) applies to Research Degrees.

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](#).

Annual Monitoring: Each Department critically reviews progression, training, supervision, the research environment, submission data and examination outcomes. Departments consider data to inform their considerations. It 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.

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.

Periodic Reviews: Postgraduate research degree provision is reviewed periodically as part of the University's [Periodic Programme Reviews](#), involving panels made up of external and internal academic staff and students at all levels, including postgraduate researchers.

15 Changes to Registration Status, Abeyance and Extensions

The changes described below are initiated by the postgraduate researcher and processed through the "MyResearch" facility in e-vision. 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.

Abeyance

If a postgraduate researcher has a serious problem which means that they need a period of time away from their studies, following discussion with their Supervisory Team, it is possible, in exceptional circumstances, for a case to be made for a period of abeyance. Such a request, together with evidence for the reasons, needs the approval of the Associate Dean (Student Experience). Abeyance cannot be approved for students who are concerned that they will be submitting late. The University will comply with statutory requirements in relation to, for example, maternity and paternity leave. In the event that a period of abeyance is approved, the candidate's end of maximum period of registration will be moved on by the period of abeyance taken.

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, [Fitness to Study](#) and any possible impact on the currency of the research following any lengthy periods of abeyance.

Postgraduate researchers returning from periods of abeyance must have a formally recorded meeting with their whole Supervisory Team, within a maximum of four weeks, as well as a progression review as defined in section 9 above, so that appropriate plans are put in place to ensure successful return to study and to ensure re-engagement with the research.

Changes to Mode of Attendance

Notification of changes to mode of attendance should be processed via the 'MyResearch' facility in e-vision. Approval to move from full-time to part-time mode of study should be based on a genuine and unexpected change in circumstances. 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. Please also see [Policy for Admission and Management of Research Students registered off-campus](#).

Extensions to Maximum Period of Registration

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 approval of the Provost.

Withdrawals

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.