



QUEEN'S
UNIVERSITY
BELFAST

Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes

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Section 1: Introduction

This Queen's Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes (RDPs) applies to all the RDPs (including the research elements of Professional Doctorates) and has been updated with full cognisance of the [UK Quality Code](#) (May 2018). The Code of Practice for RDPs has been written for students, staff, examiners, and other stakeholders. It provides links to the [Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes](#), and outlines University procedures, processes and areas of good practice.

The Code of Practice for RDPs forms an integral part of the University's quality assurance mechanisms and is designed to assure the quality and maintain the academic standards of RDPs, bringing consistency to research degree provision.

The Code of Practice for RDPs has been written for students, staff, examiners, and other stakeholders. It provides links to the [Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes](#), and outlines University procedures, processes and areas of good practice.

The Code of Practice for RDPs complements, but is not a substitute for the existing Study Regulations for RDPs. Staff and students should refer to the Study Regulations for RDPs in the first instance, in addition to the wider General Regulations. In the event of any conflict of interpretation between the Code of Practice for RDPs and the regulations, the regulations prevail.

The UK Quality Code

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) publishes the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) (the Quality Code) which acts as the definitive reference point for all UK Higher Education (HE) providers. It outlines what HE providers are required to do, what they can expect of each other, and what the general public can expect of them.

This Queen's Code of Practice for RDPs has been updated with full cognisance of the [UK Quality Code](#) (May 2018), and demonstrates how the University meets the Quality Code's expectations for Standards and Quality, the practices regarding

Research Degrees and the guiding principles outlined within the supporting Advice and Guidance related to Research Degrees.

Queen's takes account of [The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree Awarding Bodies](#), [the QAA Doctoral Degree Characteristics Statement](#), and other UK and European reference points in order to secure the academic standards of its RDPs.

The [Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes](#) and this accompanying Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes, (and in the case of the Professional Doctorate and Integrated PhD programmes – [Principles for Professional Doctorates and Integrated PhDs](#), [Study Regulations for Postgraduate Taught Programmes](#), and the relevant [Programme Specification](#)), form the academic framework for Queen's RDPs, which outlines how the University awards academic credit (where relevant) and RDP qualifications. These documents also represent the definitive record for the respective RDPs.

Queen's Research Degree Programmes

The Code of Practice for RDPs applies to all the RDPs (including the research elements of Professional Doctorates) offered by the University:

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Doctor of Philosophy (by Published Works) (PhD)
Integrated Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Master of Philosophy (MPhil)
Doctor of Medicine (MD)
Master of Surgery (MCh)*

Professional Doctorates

Doctor of Childhood Studies (DChild)*
Doctorate in Clinical Psychology (DClinPsych)
Doctor of Education (EdD)*
Doctor of Education (EdD) TESOL*

Doctorate in Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology (DECAP)

Doctorate in Midwifery Practice (DMP)*

Doctorate in Nursing Practice (DNP)*

Juris Doctor (JD)*

*no longer open for new applications

University Regulations, Policies and Procedures: Overview

The University has specific [Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes](#), which are updated on an annual basis, and include the following areas:

- i. Registration.
- ii. Regulations relating to external students and students working away from the University for a period.
- iii. Minimum and maximum periods of study, and temporary withdrawal.
- iv. Progress including supervision, monitoring and the Annual Progress Review process.
- v. Assessment and Award of Degree including requirements for Master's/Doctoral degrees, appointment of examiners, and the examinations process.

The [Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes](#) are contained within the University Calendar: [General Regulations](#), which is revised annually and includes the following areas:

- i. [Principles for Professional Doctorates and Integrated PhDs](#).
- ii. Regulations for Students including definitions, admissions procedures, fees, and graduation.
- iii. Academic Appeal Regulations (Research Degree Programmes).
- iv. Conduct Regulations and other regulations for the use of laboratories and the library.

- v. A range of procedures including those for dealing with academic offences, Fitness to Practise (particularly relevant to Professional Doctorates), and the Student Complaints Procedure.
- vi. A range of policies including the Equality and Diversity Policy, the Student Disability Policy, and the Student Maternity, Maternity Support and Adoption Policy.

The [Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes](#) are complemented at School level by a range of information including guides to specific RDPs, application and admissions procedures, and the expectations of students undertaking a RDP within a particular School. Student handbooks contain both generic and subject-specific material in relation to admissions, support during study, supervision, Annual Progress Review, and final examination. Some procedures may vary at a local level and may be influenced by the structure of the programme, particularly if it has any taught elements. The Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes will, however, have precedence over all other existing procedures at a local level. Procedures at a local level must therefore be in line with the current Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes.

Key Contacts

For further advice on the Regulations, Code of Practice or other quality assurance issues relating to Research Degree Programmes, contact the Quality Assurance and Regulations Team (qar@qub.ac.uk).

Section 2: Research Environment

Introduction

The University seeks to undertake research of the highest international standing that addresses societal and planetary challenges and changes the world for the better. To achieve this, Queen's will nurture a vibrant research culture, seeded by research-led education and built upon curiosity, discovery, innovation and enterprise.

Researchers at Queen's help tackle the global challenges of our age, changing people's lives for the better.

We are a world-class international university built on teaching excellence, leading-edge research, innovation, collaboration and engagement.

Queen's has a proud history of conducting innovative, impactful and world-leading research that has positively changed people's lives. Our [ambition for 2030](#) is to further enhance our impact by strengthening our research position and working with industry to broaden our translational impact and innovation, ensuring we deliver high-quality, world-leading research, which addresses local and global challenges.

Full details on the research and innovation system at Queen's can be found here: [Research | Queen's University Belfast \(qub.ac.uk\)](#)

Queen's has three pillars which form the framework for the University's Research Strategy: 'People', 'Research Quality' and 'Partnership and Place'.

The Research and Enterprise Directorate helps secure the University's vision for excellence and impact in its research and enterprise activities via:

- i. Identifying opportunities and research grant application development.
- ii. Fostering engagement with industry and industry-facing funding initiatives.
- iii. Translating inventions and innovations into wider commercial and societal impact.
- iv. Developing a culture of research impact and support engagement with research users.
- v. Protecting the interests of researchers and participants.
- vi. Dedicated and expert legal, contracting and intellectual property support.
- vii. Post-award project management support for major research grants.
- viii. Managing research information systems and research data analysis.

Beyond the Research and Enterprise Directorate, expert support for researchers is embedded across the University's professional services, including support for costing and pricing, systems development, open science, and learning and development.

The [Graduate School](#) offers a world-class intellectual and social hub that connects students from all disciplines to one another, and to mentors, leaders, and employers within the University and beyond. The Graduate School is about intellectual challenge beyond disciplinary borders, personal effectiveness and skills development, and promotes a culture of opportunity, innovation and enterprise, and a rich, diverse, inclusive social community. This includes support for postgraduate students to make contributions to research culture, providing opportunities for students to network beyond their disciplinary boundaries, and celebrating achievements of postgraduate students. The Graduate School provides an extensive programme of training and events which align to the [Vitae Researcher Development Framework](#), offering students access to workshops and programmes which assist them with their research.

Schools provide prospective research students with specific information on the School's research activities and what students can expect upon enrolment for a research degree. Each School website highlights the key research achievements of the School in terms of awards, status and publications. Schools also highlight evidence of their ability to attract external funding and what opportunities exist both internally and externally for the development of academic collaborations and knowledge transfer partnerships.

In order to illustrate that a School has a suitable research environment for the recruitment of postgraduate research students, it is required to:

- i. Demonstrate research excellence, as evidenced through the Research Excellence Framework.
- ii. Have an appropriate pool of research active staff capable of fulfilling the role of supervisor.
- iii. Provide appropriate facilities and support (as detailed in the Resources and Training subsection below).

Schools also facilitate effective research by providing access and opportunities to interact with academic staff, postdoctoral researchers, and other research students, for example, through research cluster activities, seminars, and peer support networks.

Resources and Training

Queen's aims to provide an enriching research environment and enable students to access appropriate resources to develop their potential within one of the UK's leading research intensive universities.

Upon enrolment on a RDP, students have access to an induction programme covering key elements of being a research student offered by the [Graduate School](#), as well as a discipline-specific induction from their School. To accommodate the on-going enrolment of postgraduate research students across the academic year, induction sessions are offered on a regular basis by the Graduate School. The Graduate School also provides access to online resources to guide students through the critical periods and milestones of their research.

Regularly updated student handbooks provide students with an overview of University regulations, policies and procedures, and links to support services such as counselling and disability.

Schools provide research students with appropriate facilities, normally including a desk in a shared room (for full-time students), access to computing facilities suitable for their research, use of a telephone for research purposes, library access, and laboratory space (as applicable).

The Graduate School supports postgraduate students to be thinkers, communicators, innovators and leaders who are future-ready. Research students can access a range of programmes, training courses and discussion opportunities to develop personally and professionally. The [Postgraduate Development Programme](#) (PGDP) offers academic skills support, personal development and [careers development](#)

opportunities for research students at the University. The Graduate School provides career guidance for research students, and offers opportunities for networking, working with research stakeholders and meeting potential employers. The Graduate School also provides consultation relating to students interested in enterprise, and supports postgraduate students to lead projects to enhance research culture and the postgraduate student experience.

Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)

The University [Intellectual Property \(IP\) Policy](#) sets out the rights of students and staff relating to IP created as a result of their work in, or for, the University. Research students who are funded; use significant University resources; use University background IP; or collaborate with University staff, to create new IP, should ensure that they liaise with the Commercial Development team in the Research and Enterprise Directorate before they exploit or otherwise deal in any way with IP arising from their work.

Research Integrity

The University provides students with training to ensure they conduct their research honestly, as open as possible – closed as necessary, with rigour, care and respect and are accountable for their activities. Good Research Practice training is mandatory for all postgraduate students, provided via an online training platform, where relevant additional training is provided on research ethics, informed consent, the use of animals in research and/or human tissue compliance. Students are also informed around the principles of Trusted Research, especially when working in STEM disciplines. As plagiarism can be a clear breach of research integrity, training is provided to ensure students understand how to avoid possible allegations. They are also informed of the consequences of this or any other form of research misconduct. To help students make an informed choice as to how they cite their evidence, the [Graduate School](#) and Library provide a wide range of face-to-face and online citation training. In addition to this, the [Centre for Educational Development](#) supports Schools by providing PGR students with guidance in the use of similarity checking software packages such as Turnitin. Schools whose students submit to Turnitin through Canvas are supported through the Canvas support team.

Any allegation of plagiarism or duplication in unpublished work, which is submitted by a postgraduate research student for assessment (via Annual Progress Review or oral examination), or any alleged academic offence occurring as part of a Taught module, will be dealt with under the [Procedures for Dealing with Academic Offences](#).

Any other allegation of misconduct in research by a postgraduate research student will be dealt with under the [Regulations Governing the Allegation and Investigation of Misconduct in Research](#).

Students can seek advice and guidance in relation to these Procedures and Regulations from [SU Advice](#), and the [Students' Union](#).

Collaborative Agreements

To ensure the academic standards of the University are adhered to in the delivery and completion of awards which may be offered in partnership with another institution, the University has a protocol for the establishment and governance of [collaborative arrangements](#). Key outcomes of this protocol involve the signature of an appropriate Collaborative Agreement or Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) by Queen's with a partner institution(s) and formal recognition of individual partner staff involved in programme delivery. In relation to PhD study, MOAs are required to support formal arrangements of joint supervision and/or the delivery of joint/dual PhD awards. Coming under the broad heading of collaborative research degree programmes, such arrangements can be made for individual students or cohorts of students and/or form part of a doctoral training programme. Partner staff acting as co- or joint supervisors are also required to apply for Recognised Supervisor status on a per-student basis.

To establish a MOA for a collaborative research degree programme, Schools should, in the first instance, inform [Academic Affairs](#) and, for agreements with universities outside the UK, [Global Student Recruitment](#). The relevant Faculty Office (including the appropriate Dean(s)) should also be consulted and appropriate support secured for the development of a particular arrangement and any associated financial or

funding implications. Relevant approval procedures are outlined within the [University's Educational Partnerships Framework](#) including application for Recognised Supervisor status.

Regulations relating to the fee and required enrolment status of collaborative research students are contained in the [Student Finance Framework](#), 3.2.5 Collaborative Research Students. The [Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes](#), regulation 3 outlines further regulations applicable to collaborative research students.

It should be noted that sufficient time (up to one year) should be allowed for the development and approval of any new collaborative arrangement and the negotiation of the supporting MOA. Agreements must normally be signed prior to the admission of students.

Section 3: Selection and Admission

This section of the Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes (RDPs) relates to the Advice and Guidance on Admissions, Recruitment and Widening Access within the [UK Quality Code](#) (November 2018), and the [Postgraduate Admissions Policy](#).

The Provision of Information for New Research Students subsection in this Code of Practice also introduces the [Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes](#) and associated processes and practices in relation to student registration; external students and students working away from Queen's; periods of study for RDPs; interruptions to study, including temporary withdrawals; progress; and assessment.

Admissions Procedures

The University is committed to providing a professional admissions service. The [Postgraduate Admissions Policy](#) and accompanying procedures are transparent, fair, and consistently applied, which ensures that prospective students understand how the admissions process works and applications are processed in a timely manner.

The Postgraduate Admissions Policy complies with relevant legislation affecting the admission of students. It presents details of criteria for admission and procedures including for PhDs by Published Works (section 3.1.2), roles and responsibilities of Faculties, Schools and Directorate staff in administering and quality assuring the admissions process (Postgraduate Admissions Policy Appendix 1), and information on policy areas such as selection procedures to RDPs (section 4.1.2), which supplements the information contained in this Code of Practice.

The University provides pre-entry information (in a variety of formats on request) to ensure that a student can make an informed decision regarding their preferred subject area as the basis of their application for a place on a RDP. Information on RDPs is available through the online [Course Finder](#) and [Postgraduate Prospectus](#), School leaflets and brochures, and School websites. Helpful information and guidance is also available at [Find a PhD Supervisor](#).

Amongst the information which should be accessible to all students are up to date overviews of the Schools, their achievements and key research interests; programme information including expected timescales for completion and supervisor support; opportunities for personal development and potential career options; entry requirements; and information about support services including training, disability support, counselling, and careers support. Where programmes are only offered on a full-time or part-time basis, this will be highlighted by the School.

Funded postgraduate research opportunities are listed on the University's Postgraduate Course Finder under [Opportunities](#).

The [Admissions and Access Service](#) is responsible for managing the Postgraduate [Applications Portal](#) or will process paper applications for the [PhD by Published Works](#), as required. The Admissions and Access Service will also issue official documentation to international applicants for immigration and visa entry purposes. [International Student Support](#) can offer advice on visa and immigration issues.

Entry Requirements and the Decision Making Process

The University applies standard criteria and procedures as part of a transparent admission process for all students. The [Postgraduate Admissions Policy](#) outlines the normal entry requirements and criteria to be met for admission to RDPs. Where specific programmes require additional criteria such as additional or specific qualifications, an assessment, or attendance at an interview, this will be detailed under the relevant programme entry in the online Course Finder. Prospective applicants are encouraged to contact the relevant School for further information, where appropriate.

Information regarding the minimum level of English language proficiency required of applicants for whom English is not their first language; and English language qualifications acceptable for entry to RDPs, is available in the [Postgraduate Prospectus](#) and [English Language Requirements web page](#).

Decisions on the admission of research students are made by suitably qualified academic members of staff, which may include the Head of School. Schools apply strict admissions criteria for research students, in line with the regulations and the Postgraduate Admissions Policy, and liaise with the Admissions and Access Service, as appropriate, when assessing a student's eligibility to enrol on an RDP.

Where applicants are required to complete an assessment or attend an interview, Schools ensure that any reasonable adjustments which the applicant may require as a result of a disability or long-term condition, including neurodiversity, are arranged in advance. Schools consult with Disability Services for advice where necessary. Further information on the support available to postgraduate candidates and students with a disability or long term condition is available from [Steps to Apply](#) and on the [Disability Services web page](#).

Offer Letter

The [Postgraduate Admissions Policy](#), section 4.5 outlines the details of the information which an applicant can expect to receive with the formal offer of admission letter, sent by email, which is specific to the individual applicant. Students

are also advised in the correspondence that by accepting an offer of admission, they are agreeing to meet the responsibilities for their academic studies and candidacy for a research degree as outlined in this Code of Practice for RDPs.

The offer letter, and supporting Admissions and Access Service [guidance](#) provide a range of information, including information relating to funding, accommodation, support services, immigration procedures, and the International Welcome and Orientation Programme as required. The Admissions and Access Service issues the official offer letters and guidance notes upon receipt of decisions from Schools.

The [Graduate School](#) is responsible for the administration and allocation of Postgraduate Student Awards. The notification of an offer of an award (studentship funding) is made by the Graduate School in a separate letter to the offer letter from the Admissions and Access Service. Queries about funding offers, and funding body terms and conditions, can be sent to the Postgraduate Awards team, email: pgawards@qub.ac.uk.

Transfer Protocol for Postgraduate Research Students from Other Institutions

From time to time, postgraduate research (PGR) students from other universities may wish to transfer to Queen's to complete their degree. This is most common where a student is transferring with their supervisor who has been recruited to Queen's.

The [Transfer Protocol for Postgraduate Research Students from Other Institutions](#) sets out guidelines and key principles on PGR students transferring from other universities. The Protocol also outlines the procedures for the consideration and approval of PGR student transfer applications, including the additional information required to support a transfer application.

Section 4: Induction

Provision of Information for New Research Students

The University is committed to ensuring that students are provided with the appropriate information and support during the initial registration period. Through

the [Welcome and Registration Portal](#), students can complete the registration process for general enrolment, finance, and accommodation. Students can also access specific information and checklists, which signpost students to the relevant Schools to complete the registration and induction process.

The [Graduate School](#) provides a range of activities during the University Welcome Week, and induction sessions in early October and February, to provide NI/GB/EU and international students with a comprehensive induction programme and access to a wide range of information and advice. In addition to helping students with the orientation of the wider University, the programme provides a range of activities, which encourage postgraduate research students to engage and build up relationships with their peers. The Graduate School also provides access to videos and online support to accommodate new students registering throughout the course of the academic year.

As part of the University-wide induction sessions, students are introduced to this Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes, and the [Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes](#). As such, students are briefed on the regulations, processes and practices regarding:

- i. Student registration (regulation 2).
- ii. External students and students working away from Queen's (regulation 3).
- iii. Periods of study for RDPs, including the minimum, normal and maximum periods of study (regulation 4), and how to request, in light of extenuating circumstances, an extended period of study and thesis submission date using the [RDP Exception Request - Registration and Thesis Submission Form \(Microsoft Word\)](#).
- iv. Temporary withdrawal (regulation 5), including how to request, in light of extenuating circumstances, an extended period of temporary withdrawal using the [RDP Exception Request - Temporary Withdrawal Form \(Microsoft Word\)](#).
- v. [Progress](#), including [supervision](#), regular progress monitoring, and [Annual Progress Review](#) (regulation 6).
- vi. [Assessment](#), including the requirements for the RDP awards, and the assessment/examination process (regulation 7).

- vii. The [Academic Appeal Regulations \(Research Degree Programmes\) procedure](#).

In addition to specific University induction programmes run by the Graduate School, School induction programmes provide a range of information including information relating to School facilities, research support, and School health and safety procedures. Schools also facilitate an initial meeting with the supervisory team, where the student and supervisors agree on plans for the RDP.

Information on on-going training opportunities is available through [the Graduate School](#). The [Student Gateway](#) provides students with a wide range of links to sources of information and advice on all aspects of student life, including access to support services, financial advice, and careers advice. (See also [Useful Contacts](#)).

Responsibilities of Students towards the University and their Supervisors

The general expectations of students, and what students can expect from the University, are contained within the [Student Charter](#). The responsibilities of students whilst engaging with their supervisor over the course of their RDP are highlighted at various stages throughout the [Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes](#). (See also [Responsibilities of the Supervisor](#)). Research students' responsibilities include:

- i. Personal and professional development, including, where possible, recognising when they need help and seeking it in a timely manner.
- ii. Maintaining regular contact with the supervisory team.
- iii. Preparing adequately for meetings with supervisors.
- iv. Setting and keeping to timetables and deadlines, including planning and submitting work as and when required, and maintaining satisfactory progress with the RDP.
- v. Maintaining research records in such a way that they can be accessed and understood by anyone with a legitimate need to see them.

- vi. Raising awareness of any specific needs or circumstances likely to affect their work.
- vii. Attending any development opportunities (research-related or other), that have been identified when agreeing development needs with supervisors.
- viii. Being familiar with the regulations and policies that affect them, including those relating to their award, health and safety, intellectual property, electronic repositories, and ethical research.

The student is responsible for the submitted work, and the eventual success or failure of the RDP. (In endorsing the Notice of Intention to Submit Service Request, the Chair of the School Postgraduate Research Committee, or nominee, does not confirm that the thesis is fit for submission or that the submission will be successful.)

The Students' Union has developed a [Student-Supervisor Relationship Toolkit](#), which provides useful guidance on establishing the relationship between student and supervisor.

Section 5: Supervision

This section of the Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes (RDPs) relates to regulation 6.1 of the [Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes](#).

Appointment of Skilled Supervisors

The Head of School (or nominee) is responsible for staff within the School and will normally appoint the supervisory team to a particular student upon their acceptance of a place on the RDP. The School will consider and appoint the most appropriate supervisory team to supervise the research project.

Appointment Criteria

The [Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes](#), regulations 6.1.1 – 6.1.10 outline the criteria for the appointment of supervisors at the University. These regulations ensure that Schools delegate supervisory responsibilities to suitably qualified academic staff.

Where a lecturer on probation is appointed as a principal supervisor, the member of staff must have gained a doctoral degree and have at least three years' experience since its award and should be employed on a contract that would cover the duration of the proposed research degree to be supervised. In addition, the second supervisor must be a senior academic with considerable experience of successful doctoral supervision - this would be someone at senior lecturer level or above with experience of successfully supervising at least two doctoral students through to completion as principal supervisor.

Individuals employed on an Education contract are eligible to be appointed as second or co-supervisor, and where their current scholarly research is of significant relevance, considered for the appointment as principal supervisor with an experienced co-supervisor on a Research and Education contract.

Each member of the supervisory team is expected to be actively engaged in research and/or scholarly activity. This means that the person is a subject specialist and currently active in research and/or educational scholarship, as demonstrated by a publication record which includes both recently published work and work in progress, or active involvement in on-going projects.

See the [Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes](#), Regulation 6 for more information.

Exception Requests

In exceptional circumstances, it may be appropriate for staff who do not meet the criteria for the appointment of supervisors, for example holders of prestigious, personal postdoctoral fellowships who have considerable postdoctoral experience, to be considered for appointment. In such instances, the Head of School/Institute may request a concession to the regulations to permit the appointment by completing the [RDP Exception Request - Supervisor Appointment Form \(Microsoft Word\)](#). This will be considered by the Chair of the Education Committee (Quality and Standards) or nominee, who will take advice from the appropriate Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor and determine whether the proposed individual is permitted to be appointed as a supervisor.

Supervisors appointed by exception must also complete the mandatory supervisor training course, and, where appropriate, be supported by an experienced second supervisor.

Training and Development

Supervisors are required to have the appropriate training and skills to perform the task of supervision satisfactorily. Supervisors new to the role of supervision must attend a one-day training course, which is delivered by the [Graduate School](#). There are three sessions per year, usually held in November, February and May, which are bookable through iTrent. Please email pg.skills@qub.ac.uk for any queries. For queries about probationary requirements, please contact Wendy Marsh, People and Culture (w.marsh@qub.ac.uk).

All supervisors (including those working in industry or professional practice) are expected to engage in developmental opportunities, to equip them to supervise research students, and to meet requirements for continuing professional development. People and Culture and the Centre for Educational Development offer a range of ongoing personal development opportunities to build skills relevant to supervision for staff.

The Supervisory Team

Supervisory teams (PDF) are normally appointed and made known to new students by the end of the induction process. The supervisory team normally comprises a principal supervisor and a secondary or co-supervisor. A third, external supervisor may be appointed where a student's research is interdisciplinary, to provide a link between the disciplines, or to facilitate international engagement. [Download further guidance on the composition of supervisory teams \(PDF\)](#).

Supervisors who are Partners

Should the supervisors be partners, the following safeguards will be implemented:

- i. Appointment of a third, internal supervisor – this will be a senior academic with significant RDP experience whose role will specifically be to facilitate project progression and appropriate supervision. They will be required to attend two

documented meetings per year together with the student and other supervisors and will be otherwise available for the student to discuss any specific concerns in confidence.

- ii. Full disclosure – students will be specifically informed of the relationship between the supervisors at the start of their RDP.
- iii. Opportunities to raise concerns – students will be advised that they are able to raise concerns relating to their supervision, in complete confidence, both through Annual Progress Review and by contacting their adviser of studies, Director of Postgraduate Research Students or Chair of the School Postgraduate Research Committee at Centre/Institute/School level.
- iv. RDP procedures – sections relating to supervision in School RDP handbooks provided to all students will be reviewed and updated to include all of the above.

Managing Changes to the Supervisory Team

In line with the [Postgraduate Admissions Policy](#), section 4.1.2, Schools consider whether appropriate supervision can be provided and maintained throughout the research period when admitting a student to a RDP. The [Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes](#), regulations 6.1.8 – 6.1.10 outline School responsibilities for ensuring the appointment of appropriate supervision in the event of a supervisor being unavailable for a significant period of the student's research, or should a change in supervisor be required under different circumstances such as at the student's request.

Responsibilities of the Supervisor

- i. The student is responsible for the eventual success or failure of the RDP. (See [Responsibilities of Students towards the University and their Supervisors](#)). The supervisory team provides the student with advice, help and guidance over the course of the RDP, enabling access to relevant training and development opportunities, to support the completion of the RDP (see [Useful Contacts](#)).
- ii. In line with the [Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes](#), regulation 6.1.11, at an initial supervisory meeting, the supervisors and

student agree the roles and responsibilities of the student and each member of the supervisory team; and the frequency, duration and format of formal meetings. In addition to the mandatory, recorded, ten (six for part-time and thesis-only students) formal meetings per year between the supervisor(s) and student, there are normally additional, informal meetings as required, depending on the needs of the student and the supervisory team. Students and supervisors are jointly responsible for ensuring that regular and frequent contact is maintained.

- iii. Responsibilities are normally shared out amongst members of the supervisory team, however it is expected that the principal supervisor has overall responsibility, with the second or co-supervisor providing a supporting role.
- iv. The principal supervisor must ensure the student is made aware of relevant policies and procedures including the [Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes](#), [Conduct Regulations](#), [procedures for the use of similarity checking software](#), and specific policies, including gaining ethical approval, and health and safety practices at School level.
- v. The principal supervisor should ensure that the student understands the nature and requirements of postgraduate research, including progress requirements and deadlines, and is aware of the expected standards as a research student.
- vi. The supervisory team should agree with the student what [training and development](#) requirements need to be fulfilled as part of the requirements for the completion of the RDP.
- vii. As highlighted in the [Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes](#), regulation 6.2, the supervisory team should agree an initial research plan with the student, which may be subject to change during the course of the RDP.
- viii. The supervisory team (and in most cases the principal supervisor) should provide timely and constructive feedback on the student's work and overall progress within the RDP, raising any concerns about progress at an early stage with the student.
- ix. The supervisory team should ensure that appropriate records are maintained in relation to supervisory meetings, progress monitoring, and [Annual Progress Review](#) (including differentiation).

- x. The supervisory team should provide appropriate pastoral support as required, by providing advice and/or referring the student to other sources of support, including relevant support services.
- xi. The supervisory team should help the student interact with others working in the field of research, for example, encouraging the student to attend relevant seminars and conferences; supporting the student in seeking funding for such events as required; and where appropriate, supporting the submission of conference papers and articles to refereed journals.
- xii. The principal supervisor is responsible for informing the School if, for any reason, any member of the supervisory team is unable to undertake their supervisory responsibilities for a significant period so that appropriate arrangements can be made to ensure continuity for the student.
- xiii. The second or co-supervisor may be required to act as the principal supervisor, should the principal supervisor be away from the University for a prolonged period of time.

The Students' Union has developed a [Student-Supervisor Relationship Toolkit](#), which provides useful guidance on establishing the relationship between student and supervisor.

Supervisor Workload

Schools should ensure that the existing teaching, research and administration commitments of potential supervisors are fully taken into consideration before they are appointed, allowing supervisors to have sufficient time to monitor and support the progress of the student's research, and to respond to the student in a timely manner.

A principal supervisor (pro-rata for co-supervisors) will normally be responsible for a maximum of six postgraduate research students (FTE). However, there are instances where the area of research, level of supervisory experience and/or staff availability allow for a larger cohort. In approving supervisory teams, the Head of School (or nominee) shall ensure that supervisory allocation is consistent with experience and availability.

Assistant Supervisor

In addition to the supervisory team which comprises the principal and second or co-supervisor, students have access to support from a number of areas including other research staff in the research cluster/School, a School postgraduate research adviser and/or tutor, and other individuals/support areas across the University.

Following a pilot carried out in 2019-20 in the Faculty of Medicine, Health and Life Sciences, an assistant supervisor role has been created to officially recognise and regulate the contribution of postdoctoral researchers to the supervision of PhD students. The [Assistant Supervisor Guidelines](#) provide further information including roles and responsibilities, eligibility criteria and the appointment process.

Section 6: Periods of Study, Holidays and Other Absences

The [Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes](#), regulation 4 outlines the minimum, normal and maximum periods of study for a student completing a RDP. These periods exclude approved temporary withdrawal periods, in line with regulation 5.

In exceptional circumstances, Schools may request a concession to the regulations to seek an extended period of temporary withdrawal, or an extended registration period and thesis submission date by completing the appropriate Research Degree Programmes Exception Request form as linked below:

- i. [RDP Exception Request - Temporary Withdrawal Form \(Microsoft Word\)](#).
- ii. [RDP Exception Request - Registration and Thesis Submission Form \(Microsoft Word\)](#)

[Download the current practice for handling RDP exception requests \(PDF\)](#).

Completed forms should be submitted by the School, by email, to gar@qub.ac.uk.

Approval of a period of extended temporary withdrawal by a School is not guaranteed. Schools reserve the right to decline a request to exceed the cumulative temporary withdrawal limit, on the following grounds:

- There would be insufficient School resources to support the student when they return.
- The student's research would no longer be valid on their return.
- The School is not satisfied that the student would complete their research.

Any refusal of a temporary withdrawal request should be documented by the SPRC. Details of the student's request and reason for refusal should be included, and the student advised of the outcome in writing.

The following information provides guidelines for staff, and students registered on RDPs, regarding holidays and other absences for postgraduate research students. Funded students should also refer to their funder's terms and conditions (or contact the Postgraduate Awards Team, graduateschool@qub.ac.uk) for any implications to their funding arrangements. International students should contact the [Immigration Support Service](#) to determine any implications for their visa.

COVID-19 Fee Free Periods

The University has put in place support for current postgraduate research students first registered prior to 31 August 2021, to allow additional time without fees (a fee free period (FFP)) in recognition of the continued impact that the COVID-19 pandemic may have had on progress of a student's research during the early stages of their programme. Further information about the fee free period and support is available at <https://www.qub.ac.uk/graduate-school/information/Weekly-update/PGR-covid-support-structure/#stipend-extensions-1016123-4>.

Holidays

All holidays should be agreed with the principal supervisor/School in advance. Full-time, registered students are entitled to take up to 40 days of annual leave, including public holidays and University closure days, each year (or pro rata for part-time, registered students). Holidays for incomplete years may be allowed pro rata.

Maternity Leave, Paternity Leave and Adoption Leave

The [Student Maternity, Maternity Support and Adoption Policy](#) provides advice and guidance on issues related to study, health and safety, and finance to:

- i. Students who become pregnant during their studies; prospective students who are already pregnant when they commence study; students who have given birth within the previous 26 weeks (or are continuing to breastfeed); their partners and those who have recently become parents (e.g. through adoption).
- ii. University staff who may have a role in advising students coming to them with these issues.

Absence Due to Accident or Illness

[Regulations for Students](#), regulations 5.11 and 5.12 outline the procedure for notifying and certifying periods of absence due to illness. Students should apply to their School for a period of temporary withdrawal (see [Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes](#), regulation 5).

Suspension of Studies – Temporary Withdrawals

In general, students are expected to complete their RDP in a single continuous period. However, students may request a period of temporary withdrawal – an approved absence from the University for a set period of time – in the following circumstances:

- i. Medical reasons.
- ii. Maternity.
- iii. Compelling personal reasons that require the student to be absent from the University.
- iv. For the purposes of taking up an internship at a centre of excellence or an industrial placement. Normally only one such visit may be considered during the period of the RDP and must not exceed 12 months' duration.

Suspensions will not normally be granted for the following reasons:

- i. Employment, temporary lectureships, exchanges, voluntary service overseas or expeditions/sport.
- ii. On the grounds of financial hardship due to not completing the RDP within the maximum period of study (i.e. 4 years FTE for the PhD programme).

The [Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes](#), regulation 5 outlines the procedure for considering periods of temporary withdrawal. Students should discuss a request for a period of temporary withdrawal with their principal supervisor/School in advance of the period of withdrawal requested. Where a temporary withdrawal request may be considered feasible by the School, students/Schools should avail of this procedure to suspend studies earlier in the student's RDP, rather than seek to extend a registration period and thesis submission date towards the end of the RDP.

Section 7: Progress Monitoring and Annual Progress

Review

Regulations to support progress within the RDP are outlined in regulation 6 of the [Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes](#). These include regulations for:

- i. Effective supervision.
- ii. The development and updating of the research plan.
- iii. An initial review of the feasibility of the project and the research plan, taking account of the required timeframe for the RDP.
- iv. Regular progress monitoring by the supervisory team, including the requirement for a minimum of ten (six for part-time and thesis-only students) formal, recorded meetings per year between the supervisor(s) and student to monitor progress against the research plan; and mechanisms to identify and deal with progress issues at an early stage.
- v. Annual Progress Review (including differentiation, see below).

Annual Progress Review

Student progress is reviewed annually, by an independent progress review panel, until the student has completed the Research Degree Programme (RDP). Schools should ensure that students know what is expected of them for Annual Progress Review (APR). School should provide details of the type of student submission that is required for students completing each year of study, including any other information/requirements that the School deems appropriate for the discipline.

Panel members should be provided with previous APR reports, or the differentiation report if applicable, prior to holding the APR meeting, to enable members to consider the student's progress.

Students registered for the PhD by Published Works normally complete the programme within one year of registration, and therefore are not expected to engage in Annual Progress Review.

The Graduate School provides training and support for preparing for Differentiation, APR and Viva.

Regulatory Requirements

The [Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes](#), regulation 6.5 outlines the requirements for APR. While the exact format of the Annual Progress Review is determined, at School level, by discipline, year of study and full-time/part-time status, it must contain the following three elements:

- i. A written submission from the student.
- ii. A meeting with the student, whereby the student can be questioned about their work by the progress review panel.
- iii. A documented outcome of the review and the progression decision.

All returning students registered for RDPs (including those engaged in the research elements of a Professional Doctorate) must have their progress reviewed annually by independent progress review panel members, in a meeting at which they are present

to discuss their work, prior to registration for the next academic year. The following subsections should provide guidance on good practice to support APR.

Panel Membership

The School shall appoint a progress review panel for each student. This should comprise two independent members of staff. One of the independent members should be an experienced member of staff within the School. The other member may be a lecturer on probation who has significant knowledge of the research area. Both are full members of the review panel, expected to read the student's submission, engage in the progress review meeting and reach a progress recommendation. Where possible, individual Panel members should remain the same for every APR across the student's research lifecycle, to provide consistency.

As it is expected that panel members will not have had substantial co-authoring or collaborative involvement in the student's work as a result of APR, panel members would be eligible to act as internal examiners at the final oral examination

One member of the supervisory team, preferably the principal supervisor, may be present to provide input, but may not take part in making the final recommendation concerning the student's progress. If a supervisor is in attendance at a panel meeting, the supervisor should be asked to leave the meeting for a few minutes so the student can openly discuss the supervisory process. Schools may wish to consider how they will receive feedback from supervisors, regarding the supervisory process, particularly if the supervisor does not attend the meeting.

Timing of Progress Review Panel Meetings

As stated in the [Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes](#), regulation 6.5.1, registration at the beginning of an academic year shall be dependent on the completion of a satisfactory progress report by the end of the previous academic year, for returning students. Schools can determine when in the second semester that APR shall take place for their students. Timing may vary depending on the student's year of study/progress, but appropriate information should be disseminated to all students in advance, to allow for the required preparations.

Differentiation is an important milestone for new PhD students. This is where the University determines if, and how a student will continue on their programme of research. For students who are required to differentiate to Doctoral status (e.g. PhD students), it is recommended that reviews are held within nine months to allow for any remedial actions arising from the review to be completed within the year.

Schools may wish to hold APR meetings for students on each year of study at different times within the second semester. This may enable the School to effectively schedule and administer APR, and to ensure that students receive feedback at a time that would benefit their future research. It is recommended that APR meetings are held early enough to allow students to complete any remedial actions required for progression before they need to register for the next academic year.

APR Examples Based on Student Status

For year one full-time students on the PhD programme, the APR meeting should comprise the differentiation interview, and take place approximately nine months after the student first enrolls on the programme. (For late enrollers, who would not be expected to differentiate until the next academic year, a light touch APR meeting should be held, such as that arranged for year one part-time students, see below. Once differentiation has been completed at the appropriate time, these students should fit in with the normal cycle of APR meetings in subsequent years.) Students being considered for differentiation should normally submit a differentiation report, a research plan, and a training record for consideration by the progress review panel.

For full-time students in year two and beyond, APR meetings may comprise a student presentation on their research, followed by a question and answer session. Students should normally submit a training record, an updated research plan/completion timetable, and one or more of the following: a progress report, PowerPoint presentation, chapter outline, thesis overview, and thesis chapter(s). Schools may also consider a report from the supervisors. These types of meetings could also be used with the majority of students on Professional Doctorate programmes.

For part-time students, Schools may wish to implement the approach outlined above at the end of the second, fourth and sixth years. A lighter touch approach (e.g. reduced student submissions regarding progress, and brief progress review meetings) could be implemented at the end of the first, third, and fifth years.

For external students, and those who are studying away from the University, in accordance with [Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes](#), regulation 3.5, students are normally required to visit the University to take part in APR (including differentiation). However, in exceptional cases where this is not possible, it would be acceptable to host the meeting between the progress review panel and student via Skype or alternative videoconferencing or teleconferencing approaches.

For students who are on an approved leave of absence when the School is completing APR, a light touch approach could be implemented when the student has returned to studies and has had sufficient time to prepare the written submission, with advice from the supervisory team. It would be good practice for the student to submit a brief research progress report to date, and a research plan for the next period, which is discussed during a brief meeting with the progress review panel.

All students who may need to register in the next academic year in order to have a final version of the thesis approved prior to graduation must complete the APR process. For students who are very near submission (as acknowledged by the principal supervisor), or who have submitted their thesis but are awaiting a viva, a light touch approach would be appropriate. This is to act as a formal way of 'keeping in touch' in case there may be progress issues, whilst recognising that a full APR at this stage would not be appropriate. These students may benefit from submitting the outline of their thesis and one or more chapters for consideration by the panel.

For students who are completing corrections within a deadline, which occurs in the next academic year, a very light touch approach would be appropriate. Students who have been asked to revise and resubmit their thesis for re-examination may benefit from submitting draft revised work to the progress review panel, and experiencing a mock viva regarding the corrections. For students who are completing corrections, the student submission may simply be a brief report on progress with the corrections, and the expected date of completion and submission of the corrections, and the APR

panel meeting could be a very brief meeting to ensure that the student is on track and that there are no issues that would delay the completion.

Any students who are completing corrections within a deadline, which occurs in the current academic year, will not have to complete the APR process. These students would be expected to register in the next academic year in order to graduate only.

These examples are not prescriptive, but should be seen as guiding Schools in determining the most appropriate way of reviewing, documenting and verifying the progress of their research students.

Feedback after the APR Meeting

Students should receive written feedback from the progress review panel once the progress recommendation has been approved by the School Postgraduate Research Committee (SPRC). It would be good practice for the supervisory team to receive a copy of this feedback to support the future progression of the student.

Referral to School Postgraduate Research Committee

Where a student has received a recommendation under [Study Regulation for Research Degree Programmes, regulation 6.5.4 iv or v](#), or where a supervisor has serious concerns regarding a student's progress outside of the APR cycle and submitted a report to the SPRC ([Study Regulation for Research Degree Programmes, regulation 6.4.2](#)), the student should be invited to appear before the SPRC before the decision is confirmed.

It is advised that the following steps are taken:

- i. The SPRC should inform the student in writing. A copy of the report should be provided to the student. The student should be given sufficient time to submit a report in response.
- ii. The student should also be invited to attend the SPRC meeting to discuss their case. The student should be advised that they may be accompanied ([Study Regulation for Research Degree Programmes, regulation 6.6.2](#)). If the student attends the meeting, the Chair of the APR Panel or the supervisor

- should also attend. If the student does not attend the meeting without good cause, the SPRC can meet and reach a decision in their absence.
- iii. The SPRC should meet to review the case (quorum outlined in [Study Regulation for Research Degree Programmes, regulation 6.6.1](#)) and agree an outcome (powers of SPRC listed under [Study Regulation for Research Degree Programmes, regulation 6.6.3](#)).
 - iv. The SPRC should inform the student in writing of the outcome within 5 working days. They should also be informed of their right to appeal.

Additional Information

Registration at the beginning of an academic year is dependent on the completion of a satisfactory progress report by the end of the previous academic year. Students who are dissatisfied with the outcome of the progress review may submit an [academic appeal \(Research Degree Programmes\)](#) if an appropriate ground for appeal can be evidenced.

It is considered good practice for draft differentiation reports, papers or thesis chapters/sections, as appropriate, to be submitted by the School to the University's similarity checking service (Turnitin) for feedback purposes, prior to Annual Progress Review. The supervisory team should provide support to the student to help interpret the Turnitin report and, where required, offer advice on correct writing and citing of sources in line with the conventions of the discipline in which they are studying. Further information is available at [TurnitinUK | Academic & Student Affairs | Queen's University Belfast \(qub.ac.uk\)](#).

In 2023-24, a new submission option, 'With Publications', will be introduced via a pilot scheme involving several University Schools. This option will permit students registered on an RDP in a pilot School to incorporate material within their submission which has been published or is in a format suitable for publication. The suitability of the 'With Publications' submission option for the student, along with the student's progress, will be monitored by the supervisory team, and discussed and recorded at APR meetings. For more information, contact gar@qub.ac.uk.

Section 8: Skills Development

The University is responsible for ensuring access to a range of personal, professional, and skills development opportunities for research students. In collaboration with Schools, academic support units and external consultants, a range of training and development interventions are made available to postgraduate research students throughout the period of their RDPs. Research students must comply with the University's training requirements for their specific RDP, the training requirements of their funding body, and any compulsory or recommended training requirements in their School to facilitate teaching or lab demonstration requirements, as appropriate. Full-time research students are expected to undertake 30 days of training and development activity throughout the course of their RDP. The Graduate School has produced a planner that will help postgraduate research students decide on the training they wish to undertake each year.

Central Training and Resources

The Graduate School enables students to access transferable and employability skills training and development opportunities through the [Postgraduate Development Programme \(PGDP\)](#), which maps onto the skills areas outlined in the national [Researcher Development Framework](#). The PGDP [programme](#) includes training courses, online learning, personal effectiveness programmes, developmental activity, peer-led seminars and one to one consultancy and advice.

Students can meet with the Graduate School team to discuss opportunities to participate in programmes. There is a monthly networking opportunity for students in the Graduate School, where students can discuss their progress and opportunities for further development.

The Graduate School supports students and academic staff in relation to [Postgraduate Researcher Development Planning](#). Students in the first year of their RDP (ideally within the first two months of registration) should plan their initial development aims and objectives. Personal Development Planning should be carried out in conjunction with the student's supervisory team, to agree the training and development requirements that need to be fulfilled in relation to their RDP.

Students then take responsibility for undertaking the relevant development activity and recording the completion of aims and objectives on their Postgraduate Researcher Development Plan and Qsis record. Personal Development Plans should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis with the supervisory team, and discussed during [Annual Progress Reviews](#).

The Queen's [Researcher Plus](#) award provides official recognition of transferable skills and assists researchers in demonstrating them to employers.

[A range of online learning tools](#) is currently available within the Postgraduate Development Programme.

Subject-Specific Training

Whilst opportunities for skills development are integrated in the RDPs, Schools may provide additional subject-specific training. This may include formal training courses or research methods modules, which students may be required to complete as part of the formal training requirements. For example, PGR students may enrol on up to two postgraduate taught modules for training purposes, subject to School approval. Students should also be made aware of training opportunities, which may be delivered, by Research Councils or other Professional Bodies. Subject to available funding and through agreement with the student's supervisor, Schools should ensure that students have a reasonable opportunity to attend or participate in conferences and seminars which further their research, as well as enhance their professional skills.

Section 9: Continuous Action for Programme Enhancement

As part of the University's quality assurance framework, Continuous Action for Programme Enhancement (CAPE) is a key mechanism by which the University can assure itself of the quality, and maintain the academic standards, of its programmes. CAPE enables programme teams to reflect and act upon relevant programme-level information within their normal cycle of business, reducing duplication of effort; and enables Faculties/committees to make judgments on the

School/programme team's analysis of pertinent data and actions to address concerns or disseminate good practice. This work forms a significant part of the basis on which Academic Council seeks to provide assurance to Senate on the following matters, so that Senate may provide the required annual assurances to the Department for the Economy:

- i. Students' academic experience at Queen's is of an appropriate quality, and robust and appropriate methodologies are in place to ensure the continuous improvement of the student academic experience.
- ii. Student outcomes are of an appropriate quality, and robust and appropriate methodologies are in place to ensure the continuous improvement of student outcomes.
- iii. Degree standards are set and maintained at an appropriate level.

[Further information on CAPE is available on the Academic Affairs website.](#)

Section 10: Assessment

This section of the Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes (RDPs) relates to regulation 7 of the [Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes](#).

Criteria for the Award of a Research Degree

Regulation 7.2 (and guidelines provided by [Student Services and Systems](#)) specifies the presentation and formatting requirements for each RDP, including the requirements for a creative practice research submission, and the requirements for the PhD by Published Works submission.

Regulation 7.3 outlines the criteria for a Master's degree by Research, including the expected abilities and qualities of the holders of the qualification.

Regulation 7.4 outlines the criteria for a Doctoral degree, including the expected abilities and qualities of the holders of the qualification.

Final Assessment Procedures

The final assessment of a RDP comprises both the submission and an oral examination (viva). For Professional Doctorates and Integrated PhDs, the assessment will also have included the assessment of taught elements at earlier stages of the RDP.

Regulation 7.5 outlines the procedure for the submission or a re-submission.

Appointment of Examiners

[Regulation 7.6](#) outlines the criteria used in appointing examiners. Examiners have an obligation of confidentiality regarding the submission and the examination. Schools have a responsibility to ensure no conflict of interest exists between the student and the examiners which could be perceived to influence their judgement. Two external examiners should be used in any instance where a student has held an employment contract with Queen's during the course of their research degree, or in any other case where personal interest might be involved.

Schools appoint the [internal examiner \(Microsoft Word\)](#) and the [independent convenor \(Microsoft Word\)](#); and nominate the external examiner(s), for approval by the Chair of the Education Committee (Quality and Standards) (or nominee). The external examiner nomination process is managed via Qsis.

A formal appointment letter is sent to the external examiner, by email, along with links to appropriate regulations and guidance. The letter will also indicate a neutral point of contact within the School to whom the external examiner can raise any concerns prior to the completion of the Independent Report. This ensures that the internal and external examiners have not been in contact before they have completed an independent assessment of the submission, and so assures the quality of the examination process.

If, following approval by the Chair of the Education Committee (Quality and Standards) (or nominee), an external examiner needs to be replaced, a new nomination must be processed on Qsis. The student should be informed that the external examiner has changed, as the original examiner is unavailable. Where this

is the case for a resubmission, the new external examiner should be provided with the Joint Examiner Report from the original examination. The internal examiner should meet with the new external examiner in advance of them receiving the resubmission, to provide the context of the previous examination and the changes required for the resubmission. As a new examination will take place, both examiners must be satisfied that the resubmission is of doctoral standard to make the award.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Head of School designates a member of staff to make the arrangements for the oral examination, in consultation with the student and the examiners. This should not be the internal examiner, in order to assure the quality of the examination process.

The external examiner is a specialist in the subject area of the submission and will take the lead in the examination. The internal examiner is a full examiner, and is expected to have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the topic to provide a judgement on the quality of the submission and to play a full part in the examination.

In any instance where an internal examiner is not appointed ([see regulation 7.6.2](#)), the Head of School appoints an independent member of the internal staff to co-ordinate the examination process.

A University Director of Research (or nominee from the University of equivalent experience, i.e. senior lecturer or above) is appointed as an independent convenor of the oral examination panel. The independent convenor is in attendance to monitor the conduct of the examination, to provide a report, and to collate all the necessary paperwork after the viva has taken place.

The following guidelines outline the role of the independent convenor:

- i. The convenor is responsible for ensuring that the oral is conducted in a fair manner, and must be present for the duration of the examination. However, the convenor is not one of the examiners and will not participate in the examination of the student, nor is there a requirement to read the submission.
- ii. The convenor introduces those present at the oral examination, and ensures that all parties understand the procedures to be followed, and the expectations

of each member. The convenor offers assistance and facilitation where necessary.

- iii. The convenor is responsible for ensuring that the oral is of a reasonable duration. Where the oral is longer than two hours, it is recommended that the student be offered a short intermission. Where difficulties arise, the convenor will decide whether an adjournment is required.
- iv. The convenor intervenes if there is a danger of unfairness, bias or unprofessional behaviour.
- v. Towards the end of the oral examination, the convenor asks the supervisor to withdraw so that there is an opportunity to say anything that the student would prefer to say without the presence of the supervisor.
- vi. At the end of the oral examination, the convenor asks the student to withdraw while the examiners deliberate.
- vii. If the examiners wish to advise the student of their decision, the convenor ensures that the student knows that this decision is provisional only. The student must await a formal communication from Student Services and Systems.
- viii. The convenor is required to submit a report on the standard template provided by Student Services and Systems covering the procedural conduct of the examination.
- ix. The convenor should collate the paperwork (examiners reports and their own report) after the viva, for the School Office to present to the Chair of the School Postgraduate Research Committee (SPRC), or Head of School nominee, for signature.

Only one supervisor may attend the oral, with the agreement of the student, and may speak only with the examiners' agreement. The supervisor's main role is to comment on any practical or administrative difficulties in the pursuit of the research raised by the student.

The Preparatory Period Prior to the Oral Examination

In order to provide an opportunity for students to become familiar with the typical examination conditions, requirements and expectations of the oral examination, all

postgraduate research students should be invited to experience a mock viva approximately two weeks before the student's scheduled oral examination. It is recommended that the principal supervisor meets with the student for approximately one hour to role-play the viva experience, taking on the role of the external examiner, and questioning the student about the submission and associated research areas, and then providing feedback to the student at the end of the session. The [Graduate School](#) provides additional information and student resources regarding preparing for the oral examination.

[Guidelines for students on the submission process](#) are provided by Student Services and Systems, which is responsible for sending the submission to the examiners, along with the template examination reports.

The research and the written submission must be the student's own work. An examiner who, in reading a submission, discovers evidence of plagiarism, fabrication of results or other research misconduct, should report the matter immediately to the Head of School. Any allegation of plagiarism or duplication will be dealt with under the [Procedures for Dealing with Academic Offences](#). Any other allegation of research misconduct will be dealt with under the [Regulations Governing the Allegation and Investigation of Misconduct in Research](#). The examination will not continue until the investigation process is complete, and may not continue at all if a substantive misconduct in research case is established.

Each examiner is required to complete an Independent Report on the submission before the oral examination, without consulting the other examiner. Each examiner indicates in this preliminary report whether the submission provisionally satisfies the requirements for the research degree, and makes an appropriate provisional decision subject to the outcome of the oral examination.

The internal examiner contacts the external examiner(s) a few days before the oral (once the Independent Reports have been completed) to discuss how the examination is to be handled. This enables them to identify the major issues which will be raised in the examination and to decide whether the student needs to submit any additional material (e.g. raw data). The internal examiner informs the supervisor at once if additional material is needed. In any instance where an internal examiner

is not appointed, the Head of School appoints an independent member of the internal staff to co-ordinate the examination process.

Examiners meet briefly before the oral examination starts to exchange and discuss the Independent Reports.

The student may not communicate with the examiners about the submission before the examination.

The oral examination must take place without undue delay, normally within three months from the date the submission is sent to the examiners.

Format of the Oral Examination

The oral examination may be held in-person (on campus), fully remote or through a hybrid model where one or more participants attend remotely. The School Postgraduate Research Committee (SPRC) is responsible for determining the specific viva arrangements for each examination and should formally inform all parties involved once the decision is made. Factors contributing to this decision may include:

- i. Preference of the examiners, the student and the supervisory team.
- ii. Availability and cost of the examiners and the student to travel to the University.
- iii. Support available for the student.
- iv. Technology available to participants to conduct the viva online.

Where a viva is held remotely, or in hybrid, the examination should be conducted in compliance with the [Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes \(7. Assessment/Award\)](#). [Guidelines for conducting remote vivas](#) (*under review*) are available which provide the panel and the student with additional support and considerations relevant to an online examination environment.

The Oral Examination Process and Communicating the Result to the Student

[Regulation 7.7](#) outlines the oral examination process, award decisions, and the procedure to be followed if the examiners cannot reach agreement on a decision.

An oral examination is compulsory for all RDPs (including for all resubmitted theses following an outcome of revise and resubmit). It may serve a number of different functions, including the following:

- i. It provides the student with the opportunity to defend the submission through high-level debate with experts in the subject.
- ii. It gives the examiners an opportunity to explore any doubts they may have about the material presented in the submission.
- iii. It can be used to determine that the student is the author of the written materials submitted.
- iv. It enables the examiners to check that the student has a thorough understanding of the theoretical framework, issues, methods and statistical analysis involved.

An agreed Joint Report, signed by both examiners, is completed after the oral examination, and should be submitted to the School within five working days of the oral examination. The Joint Report reflects the examiners' assessment of both the written submission and the student's performance at the oral examination, and includes a decision in accordance with [regulation 7.7.5](#). It need not repeat comments already made in the Independent Reports. The Joint and Independent Reports taken together should be of sufficient length and provide sufficient evidence to justify the examiners' decision.

If the examination decision requires submission corrections or revision and resubmission, the examiners list the required amendments within the Joint Report. If, in accordance with [regulation 7.7.5 iv](#), the examiners have recommended that the submission be revised and resubmitted for the Doctoral degree, and have also proposed a possible alternative option for the award of a Master's degree subject to corrections, the examiners should list the amendments required for each scenario so that the student can decide on the preferred option. (The student must confirm the preferred option with Student Services and Systems within ten working days of the date of the examination outcome notification, which is sent by Student Services and Systems.)

The independent convenor submits a report covering the procedural conduct of the examination, to the School, within five working days of the oral examination.

The Chair of the School Postgraduate Research Committee (SPRC), or Head of School nominee, considers the Independent Reports, the Report of the Independent Convenor, and the Joint Report, and may refer the case back to the examiners if the Joint Report does not justify the decision made. Otherwise, the Chair of the SPRC, or Head of School nominee, signs the Joint Report to confirm that the result has been justified. The Independent Reports, Joint Report, and Report of the Independent Convenor are sent to Student Services and Systems, normally within eight working days of the oral examination.

Upon receiving the examiner report forms, the Head of Registry Services or nominee signs the Joint Examiner report and viva outcome letter. Student Services and Systems then notifies the student of the outcome of the examination, and sends the student a copy of the examination reports (containing the list of required amendments, if appropriate), within two weeks of receipt of the examiner reports from the School. Amendments must only be made as directed by the examiners, and not to other areas of the submission.

Where a student is required to revise and resubmit, Student Services and Systems will change their academic load to Thesis Resubmission and the student will be liable for a resubmission charge. The student has not passed their examination at this stage. The outcome of revise and resubmit reflects that substantial revisions are

required to make the submission acceptable and students should re-engage with their supervisory team to address the issues identified by the examiners within the 12 month period. A new oral examination, with the same examiners, is required for the resubmission. The same examination processes as the original examination, including Notice of Intention to Submit; Nomination of Examiners; and Examiner Report Forms, will apply.

Following approval of the corrections received within the deadline set by the examiners, an examiner (normally the internal examiner) signs off the Thesis Deposit forms certifying that all corrections have been completed within deadline. The examiner may not introduce any new requests for additional corrections beyond those required in the joint report. Student Services and Systems confirms that an electronic submission has been made via Pure (see information on Open Access and Thesis Embargo below). Student Services and Systems then notifies the student that the award has been approved.

Students who fail to submit a corrected or revised submission by the date set by the examiners will normally be regarded as having failed the examination and the decisions of the examiners will lapse. If, in exceptional circumstances, the student is granted a period of temporary withdrawal following the original submission, the deadline for submitting a corrected or revised submission will be adjusted accordingly. This will be managed in the normal manner by the School, unless the student has/will exceed the cumulative maximum of two years' temporary withdrawal from the programme. In this instance, the student/School should submit a [RDP Exception Request - Temporary Withdrawal Form \(Microsoft Word\)](#) by email to gar@gub.ac.uk for consideration by the Education Committee (Quality and Standards). The School should update the examiners, and notify Student Services and Systems as appropriate, if a temporary withdrawal period has been granted.

Open Access and Thesis Embargo

Increasingly, Open Access is becoming an essential component of how research is disseminated and communicated at universities. All students undertaking Research Degree Programmes (RDP) at Queen's University must make their submission open access (OA) through uploading to Pure, which is the University's Current Research

Information System. This is a compulsory requirement to successfully graduate. It is the responsibility of the RDP student to upload to Pure before their account in Pure expires.

All RDP students, moreover, are responsible for undertaking clearance of third-party copyright in their theses. Where possible, and in line with current copyright legislation and publisher licence restrictions, the final corrected version of the submission will be made available open access on the Research Portal. In all instances, it is the responsibility of the author to ensure that they meet the OA requirements outlined above.

RDP students can embargo their submission while they seek to get their research published. Embargoed options are outlined in the thesis deposit form. Embargo options are available 1-5 years from the date of the award. There may be specific circumstances also where redaction of submission content is necessary; this may be temporary to accommodate an embargo, or may be permanent. In all cases, redaction must be discussed with the [Open Research Librarian](#) for e-theses.

There are RDP students who are in receipt of funding in which there is an open access requirement. For example, UKRI funded students are obliged to share their submission within 12 months of the award. Where a student has such an open access mandate from a funder and is seeking to get their submission published, it may not be appropriate to upload to Pure and make available within the funder's stipulated timeframe. Thus, it may be possible for UKRI funded students, or similar, to embargo their submission for a period between 2 and 5 years.

To be eligible, students must have concerns that making their submission open within 12 months would impact them or their career detrimentally. Students must select an embargo that is **no longer than necessary**. Students must, where possible, be willing to embrace the spirit of openness also. For example, Northern Bridge funded students may embargo their creative writing PhDs for the maximum 5-year embargo period. The full text of the submission should be made open access at the end of this period. Supplementary materials such as journal entries and work/writing samples etc. can be uploaded, especially if the full text of the submission

is embargoed for the full 5 years. This is to honour the spirit of openness as insisted upon by the funder.

Only in the rarest circumstances would the University consider waiving the requirement to make the submission OA and offer an embargo in perpetuity. This could only occur in circumstances where sharing the submission would not be possible, for example where making the submission OA would compromise the safety or health of the student, or have significant negative ramifications to sharing e.g. legal disputes, confidentiality, sensitivity of content, employment etc. In such cases, a formal request must be sought by the student via the E thesis team. Approval can only be granted directly from the Dean of Graduate Studies.

Where an RDP student has received approval for embargo in perpetuity, the student is nonetheless obliged to share the submission with the University's Open Research Librarian for e-theses. The electronic submission will be placed in a safe and secure online storage, whereupon it will be subject to a future review decision (70+ years).

Hard-bound submission is no longer a mandatory requirement for RDP students from 1 September 2021, with the exception of PhD by Published Works.

Note that advice can be sought from the [Open Research Librarian](#) for e-theses on the following areas: Embargoes, redactions and versioning of the submission, copyright issues, publication planning, visibility of research outputs and associated data connected with the submission.

Section 11: Research Student Complaints and Appeals

This section of the Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes (RDPs) relates to the Advice and Guidance on Concerns, Complaints and Appeals within the [UK Quality Code](#) (November 2018).

It is in the interests of research students and the University to resolve problems at an early stage.

The procedures for addressing complaints and academic appeals at various levels apply equally to all research students, including those who are part-time, off-site, registered in collaborative programmes, or on visiting programmes. The links below provide students, staff and other stakeholders with details of the relevant regulations, guidance, flowcharts, and forms.

A complaint under the [Student Complaints Procedure](#) is an expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service, action or lack of action by the University.

The [Academic Appeal Regulations \(Research Degree Programmes\)](#) are intended for use by students on Research Degree Programmes (including students engaged in the research elements of a Professional Doctorate on Integrated PhD programme) who wish to appeal against a decision on student progression, assessment and/or award or an examiners' decision regarding the outcome of an oral examination.

Students can seek advice and guidance in relation to these Procedures and Regulations from [SU Advice](#), and the [Students' Union](#).

Section 12: Useful Contacts

Nature of Query	Sources of Advice
Academic	
Annual Progress Review including Differentiation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Code of Practice section: Progress Monitoring and Annual Progress Review - Supervisory Team - School*
Submission	Student Registry
Examination Arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Code of Practice section: Assessment - Supervisory Team
Academic Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supervisory Team - Postgraduate Officer, Students' Union - Advice SU, Students' Union - Learning Development Service

Supervisory Problems	- Supervisory Team - School* - Postgraduate Officer, Students' Union
Appeals and Complaints	- Academic Affairs (Appeals and Complaints Team) - Advice SU, Students' Union
Training and Development	
Student Skills Development	- Code of Practice section: Skills Development - Graduate School - Postgraduate Development Programme
Supervisor Training	Graduate School (Training And Development Team)
Wellbeing	
Financial Difficulties	Advice SU, Students' Union
Personal Difficulties	- Supervisory Team - School* - Student Wellbeing Service - University Chaplains
Disability	Disability Services
Finance	
Grants/Studentships	The Graduate School (Postgraduate Awards Team)
Tuition Fees	Student Finance
Scholarships and Award	- Opportunities for current students - International Scholarships
Other	
Admissions	Admissions and Access Service
Enrolment and Registration	Student Registry
Graduation	Student Registry
Research Student Lifecycle / Research Student Management	Qsis Services

Open Access	Open Research Librarian
Equipment and Facilities	- Supervisory Team - School*
Intellectual Property Rights and Publications	Research Governance
Turnitin	Centre for Educational Development
Immigration Support	Immigration Support

* School contacts may include School office, Head of School, Chair of SPRC, Adviser of Studies etc. This will vary across Schools.