



Academic Handbook
Section 2R
Regulations for Postgraduate Research
Students

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Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Research Students.

INTRODUCTION

1. The University has the powers to award the research degrees of Master of Philosophy (MPhil) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) to registered students who successfully complete approved programmes of supervised research in accordance with these regulations and the UK Quality Code, the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and the University Generic Level Descriptors.
2. Programmes of research may be proposed in any field of study subject to the requirements that:-
 - a. The proposed programme is capable of leading to scholarly research;
 - b. The University has the expertise and resources to adequately supervise the research; and
 - c. The completed submission is capable of being assessed by appropriate examiners.
3. The submission may be in the form of a final thesis or by published work, artefact or performance that is accompanied by a written commentary placing it within its academic context.
4. All proposed research programmes will be considered for research degree registration on their academic merits and without reference to the concerns or interests of any associated funding body.
5. These regulations and individual programmes of research must take due regards of the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity scheme.

GOVERNANCE

6. Academic Board has delegated to the Research Degrees Committee (RDC) the authority to award research degrees on its behalf. It has also delegated the responsibilities for the student research environment, including the quality of learning opportunities, admissions and the monitoring of research students and supervisory arrangements.
7. Research Degrees Committee will report annually to Academic Board on:-
 - a. alignment with the UK Quality Code and other relevant sector codes;
 - b. performance against internal and external indicators and targets;
 - c. the effectiveness of the research environment, the supervisory arrangements and training opportunities provided;
 - d. outcomes of student monitoring, student feedback (including PRES), and engagement with the university; and
 - e. the outcomes of any appeals and/or complaints.

8. All students will be allocated to a Research Hub and the Hub PGR co-ordinators are responsible for convening scrutiny panels overseeing admissions, monitoring the quality of the student experience and research environment, progression of students and the effectiveness of supervisory teams.

QUALIFICATION DESCRIPTORS

9. In alignment with the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies¹ students awarded a research degree should meet the level descriptors in full.
10. Students awarded a PhD will be able to demonstrate through the body of their work and viva examination:-
 - a. the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication;
 - b. a systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice;
 - c. the general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems;
 - d. a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry in their discipline; and
 - e. informed judgement making on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and the ability to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences.
11. Students awarded an MPhil will be able to demonstrate through the body of their work and viva examination:-
 - a. a systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study or area of professional practice;
 - b. a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship;
 - c. originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline;
 - d. conceptual understanding that enables the student:-
 - i. to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline;
 - ii. to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses; and
 - iii. sound decision-making dealing with complex issues both systematically and creatively in the absence of complete data and be able to communicate their conclusions to specialist and non-specialist audiences.

¹ UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Part A: setting and maintaining academic standards

CO-OPERATION

12. The University encourages co-operation with industrial, commercial, professional or research establishments for the purposes of research leading to research degree awards. Such co-operation is intended to:-
 - a. encourage outward-looking and relevant research;
 - b. extend the student's own experience and perspectives of the work;
 - c. provide a wider range of experience and expertise to assist in the development of the project;
 - d. be mutually beneficial; and
 - e. enable the student to become a member of a research community (where appropriate).
13. Co-operation with one or more bodies external to the University may be formal or informal. Formal co-operation is known as collaboration and will normally require financial support for the project from the Collaborating Establishment and/or use by the student of its facilities and other resources, including supervision.
14. In such cases a formal letter from the Collaborating Establishment confirming the agreed arrangements should be submitted with the application, except where the collaboration is an integral part of the project. The name(s) of the Collaborating Establishment(s) will appear on the student's thesis and degree certificate.
15. Informal co-operation need not require financial support for the project but could allow the student access to facilities and resources. In both cases, however, it is the responsibility of the Director of Studies (DoS) to ensure that prior permission is obtained for the use of necessary facilities, resources and access from the relevant persons at the chosen establishment(s) before embarking on the research project. All such agreements must be reported to the relevant Scrutiny Panel as part of the application for project approval.

ADMISSIONS AND SELECTION

16. An individual may apply to be admitted to read for a research degree of:-
 - a. Master of Philosophy;
 - b. Master of Philosophy with possibility of transfer to Doctor of Philosophy;
 - c. Doctor of Philosophy (direct entry); or
 - d. Doctor of Philosophy by Prior Publication².
17. An applicant for admission to read for a research degree should hold:-
 - a. a first or second class honours degree of a UK University or a qualification which is regarded by NARIC³, the relevant Scrutiny Panel and the Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC as equivalent to such an honours degree; or
 - b. a Masters degree of a UK University or a non UK qualification which is regarded by the

² Available only to staff of the University

³ National Academic Recognition Information Centre

- relevant Scrutiny Panel and the Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC as equivalent to a Masters degree; or
- c. other qualifications, publications and/or appropriate professional training and experience, which the relevant Scrutiny Panel and the Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC considers equivalent to a or b above.
18. Permission to register directly for a Doctor of Philosophy award will only be given where an applicant can demonstrate:-
- a. they have achieved the equivalent of the MPhil transfer stage at another University; or
 - b. they have considerable research experience, including peer reviewed publications or public exhibitions/ performances.

English Language Qualification

19. For applicants whose first language is not English it is necessary to demonstrate a satisfactory standard in English. This may be demonstrated either by holding a first degree from a UK University taught in English or a degree that has been taught and assessed in English or by reaching a satisfactory standard in an approved test equivalent to, an overall IELTS (International English Language Testing System) score of 6.5 with minimum sub-scores of 6.0 in all component sections (writing, reading, listening and speaking) or an overall TOEFL IBT 94-95 score, with a minimum score of 22 in each of the four component sections (writing, reading, listening and speaking). Students requiring visas must meet the English language requirements of the UK Government.
20. Permission to present a thesis in another language is not allowed.

Admission to a research programme

21. All applicants must complete the University application form, which requires details of the student's academic achievements, a research proposal and source of funding, and the student must provide copies of any qualifications (presentation of the originals will be required as part of the enrolment process).
22. The application will be assessed by a PGR co-ordinator for potential suitability. If the co-ordinator believes the applicant and proposal are suitable and the University has the relevant expertise and capacity to supervise the student and an adequate research environment, they will arrange for an interview panel consisting of a member of the Scrutiny Panel and a member of the potential supervisory team, using the University Template.
23. The Interview Panel must satisfy themselves that:-
- a. the student is suitably qualified and has access to adequate financial support for the duration of registration;
 - b. the student is embarking on research in a field that will yield a viable research project within the designated time limit and for which expert supervision is available within the university;
 - c. the university is able to provide appropriate facilities and resources, taking into account

- any special learning needs;
 - d. there is critical mass of relevant research and researchers at the University; and
 - e. there has been an appropriate preliminary allocation of DoS and co-supervisor(s).
24. The interview panel can:-
- a. recommend the applicant for acceptance, in which case the panel must include an indicative training needs analysis;
 - b. refer the applicant to another Scrutiny Panel for consideration; or
 - c. reject the applicant, giving reasons.
25. Where the applicant is recommended for acceptance, the PGR co-ordinators must finalise the proposed supervisory team and the relevant Director of School(s) must approve both the staff and the physical resource commitment. The Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC, on behalf of RDC, can then formally approve the registration of the student.
26. New students can only register on the RDC approved registration dates.

Change to the Approved Research Programme

27. Where a student wishes to make a substantial change in the academic discipline and/or expert supervision of the approved research project, the student will normally be required to withdraw from the programme of research. Provided the University is able to offer adequate expert supervision in the new area of research and there is a critical mass of relevant research and researchers at the University, the student may re-register by submitting a new application as if it was a first application.

Confidentiality

28. Normally, a thesis is made publically available upon successful completion. However, where an applicant, their collaborative establishment or their sponsor wishes the research and thesis to remain confidential for a period after completion of work, application for approval by the Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC shall normally be made at the time of admission. In cases where the need for confidentiality emerges at a subsequent stage, a special application for the thesis to remain confidential after submission should be made to the Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC. The period approved will not normally exceed two years from the date of the oral examination.

REGISTRATION

29. A student may register on a full-time or a part-time basis. A full-time student should devote on average at least 35 hours per week to the research; a part-time student on average at least 17.5 hours per week. A full-time student may undertake a small amount of paid work compatible with the student's full-time studies with the expectation that the total demand on the student's time is no more than six hours per week.

The registration period

30. The minimum, standard and maximum periods of registration are as follows:

MPhil	Minimum	Standard	Maximum
Full-time *	18 months	24 months	36 months
Part-time	36 months	48 months	72 months
PhD (via transfer from MPhil registration & including that period of MPhil registration)	Minimum	Standard	Maximum
Full-time *	24 months	36 months	48 months
Part-time	48 months	72 months	96 months
PhD (direct)	Minimum	Standard	Maximum
Full-time *	24 months	36 months	48 months
Part-time		72 months	96 months
PhD by prior publication (University staff only)	Minimum	Standard	Maximum
Part-time	6 months		12 months

**Including any writing-up period.*

31. To be eligible for an award a student must be registered on the award and all awards must have been completed, including periods of formal suspension, within the approved maximum registration periods specified in the table above.
32. The University normally expects students to complete their programme within a standard period of study. A student who has made unusually rapid progress with a programme of research may apply to the Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC for permission, exceptionally, to submit a thesis in advance of the minimum period of registration set out. Such requests will be considered very carefully and will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.
33. Throughout these regulations for the purposes of calculation of minimum or maximum permitted periods for each stage of the programme of study, the equivalent period of part-time registration will be considered to be twice that of the actual full-time period unless otherwise stated.

Transfer of registration mode

34. A student may change registration mode at any point during their studies.
35. Where a student transfers from full-time to part time registration, for purposes of calculation (minimum or maximum registration periods) the equivalent period of part-time registration will be considered twice that of the actual full-time period of registration remaining to the student at the date of the transfer being granted.
36. Where a student transfers from part-time to full-time registration, for purposes of calculation (minimum or maximum registration periods) the equivalent period of full-time registration will be considered to be half that of the actual part-time period of registration remaining to the student at the data of the transfer being granted.
37. These rules apply on the same pro-rata basis to MPhil registration.

Extensions

38. The Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC may, because of circumstances beyond a student's control, exceptionally extend a student's period of registration beyond the permitted maximum, normally for not more than one year. A student seeking such an extension should normally apply at least 6 months prior to the end of the registration period.

Withdrawal

39. Where a student has discontinued their programme of research, the withdrawal of registration must be notified to the Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC and where relevant UKVI.
40. A student who has failed to engage with their supervisory team and has not responded to formal correspondence from the University for a period of 60 days will normally be deemed to have withdrawn their registration and the withdrawal will be notified to the Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC and where relevant UKVI.
41. A student must register as a student of the University, and continue to re-register on an annual basis in October at the start of the academic year, until submission of the thesis has taken place. At the time of registration, a student must pay such fees as published by the University. This also applies to students whose initial registration began at the January intake point.
42. Students who have withdrawn from their programme of research and wish to re-register must submit a new application as if it was a first application. The University is under no obligation to re-admit students.

Suspension

43. Where the student is prevented, by ill-health or other compelling cause, from making progress with the research, the registration may be suspended by the Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC for a period of not less than a month and normally not more than six months, to a maximum of 1 year. Appropriate medical evidence will normally be required to support requests for suspension on health grounds. Retrospective suspension of registration will not normally be granted. Pressure of work will not be considered as grounds for suspension.

Serious illness during registration

44. When a student is ill and unable to study they must inform their supervisor. Where a student is absent for a period of 6 weeks or more through illness the University will automatically suspend the student and where relevant inform UKVI.

Staff Registration

45. Members of staff of the University are permitted to register for a research degree. To ensure that the proposed programme of work can be completed within the designated timescale, the amount of time the applicant can devote to the research must be agreed with the Director of School or Director of Service before registration.

Payment of fees

46. A student who is in fees arrears will not be eligible to be progressed, re-enrolled, examined, receive tuition or have access to University facilities and resources until the outstanding debt has been cleared or a payment plan agreed. Students will be informed in writing by the Finance Service of the intention to impose sanctions. Any subsequent failure to clear any debts will result in withdrawal of registration.⁴
47. Students whose registration has been withdrawn through debt and who wish to resume their studies following payment of the outstanding debt must submit a new application as if it was a first application. The University is under no obligation to re-admit students.

Dual registration

48. If a student wishes to concurrently register for another degree at Solent or another Higher Education Institution, the express permission of the Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC is required.

Induction

49. New students should attend induction sessions arranged for incoming PGR students by the University. The supervisory team will also undertake a training needs analysis with new students incorporating any relevant activities provided by the University or an appropriate external provider. The training should be designed to ensure competence in research methods and/or knowledge related to the subject of the thesis. The agreed training programme must be recorded in the Project Approval report.

PROJECT APPROVAL

50. All students must have their programme of research approved by a relevant Scrutiny Panel and the Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC, normally within six months of registration for a full-time student and twelve months for part-time students. In all cases, students seeking project approval must complete and return form RD1PA and make a brief presentation to the panel.
51. In approving a proposal, the relevant Scrutiny Panel and Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC must be satisfied with the following:-
 - a. the appropriateness and viability of the proposed programme of work;
 - b. the suitability and qualification of the supervisory team; and
 - c. the relevance and appropriateness of a programme of related studies, normally to include: transferable and generic skills, subject specific training, and attendance at, and participation in, relevant seminars.
52. In cases where a student's work forms part of a larger group project, each individual project must in itself be distinguishable for the purposes of assessment and be appropriate for the award. The application should indicate clearly each individual contribution and its relationship to the group project.

⁴ Fee and Payment Regulations Home, EU and Island students (Academic Services, Compliance)

53. Where a research degree project is part of a piece of funded research, the relevant Scrutiny Panel must establish to its satisfaction that the terms on which the research is funded do not detract from the fulfilment of the objectives and requirements of the student's research degree.
54. Where a project proposal is not approved, the student will normally be given an opportunity to seek approval for a revised project within 2 months for a full-time student and 4 months for a part-time student. If, after the student has been given an opportunity to remedy defects, the proposal remains unsatisfactory, the Scrutiny Panel will normally recommend termination of registration to the Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC.
55. A student seeking a change to an approved registered research degree programme must apply in writing to the relevant Scrutiny Panel for approval either as part of the admission process or, if the requirement emerges later, as a separate application.

SUPERVISION

Appointment of a supervisory team

56. It is the responsibility of the PGR co-ordinator to propose and get approval for the supervisory team as part of the admission process. A supervisory team will normally have two and exceptionally three supervisors, with a designated Director of Studies (DoS) (first supervisor).
57. No supervisor should have any conflict of interest with the research degree student.
58. Between them, supervisory teams should have experience of supervising at least two students to the successful completion of a UK doctoral level degree or equivalent international qualification.
59. The DoS will normally have at least two completions and will undertake management of the supervisory team's procedural and monitoring responsibilities. The DoS will have broad disciplinary experience and may contribute subject specific expertise to the supervisory team. The DoS will have the responsibility to ensure that the student is supervised on a regular and frequent basis by the supervisory team and that student progression reviews are undertaken within timeframes stipulated by these regulations.
60. Normally all supervisors should be members of the University's staff. Exceptionally, where the University supervisor leaves the University at a point where the candidate is near to completion and/or it would disadvantage the student, the supervisor may be asked to continue as an external supervisor.
61. In addition to the supervisors, an adviser or advisers may be proposed to contribute some specialised knowledge or a link with an external organisation.

62. The supervisory team will have responsibility for considering and advising the student on both the health and safety and the ethical aspects of any research proposal, including any parts that may be carried out away from the University.

Change in a supervisory team

63. The PGR co-ordinator is responsible for the oversight of supervisory teams and in the event that a supervisor needs to be permanently or temporarily replaced the co-ordinator should recommend a suitable replacement to the Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC for approval and subsequent noting at RDC.

Supervisors

64. All supervisors should be appropriately qualified, that is they should normally have a doctorate and be an active researcher with discipline or methodological expertise, or they must be an experienced and active researcher as evidenced by a track record of public output and/or previous PGR completions.
65. All supervisors are expected to be active in terms of their own Continuing Professional Development. It is expected that supervisors will avail themselves of the opportunities provided by the University and other sector bodies and failure to do so may constitute grounds for Scrutiny Panels to decline to approve supervisory teams.
66. Supervisors with no previous experience are required to attend the University's supervisors' training prior to, or within 6 months of, starting to supervise.
67. Members of staff may not act as supervisors if they are currently registered for a research degree (this does not apply to staff members registered for a doctorate by previously published works). Upon being awarded their research degree, staff members will become eligible to hold the role of supervisor.
68. If a member of staff is currently a Director of Studies and decides to read for a research degree, they must cease undertaking this role immediately for the duration of their studies. With the consent of the Director of School or Director of Service and Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC, the member of staff may exceptionally remain on the supervisory team as co-supervisor.

Supervisory meetings

69. Student needs for supervision vary depending on the rate of their progress, where the student is in the life cycle of their research project, and by the nature of the discipline. Based on the student needs there should be explicit agreement between students and supervisors on the actual frequency of supervisory meetings. As a minimum, meetings for full time students should be at least every 6 weeks and for part time students at least every 8 weeks.
70. A written record of each supervisory meeting must be kept. This record must be agreed between the student and the supervisors present at the meeting and must include the date,

subjects discussed, and agreed outcomes.

71. All copies of the supervisory meeting records must be submitted by the DoS to the Research, Innovation and Enterprise PGR administration at the relevant progression monitoring points within the current academic session.
72. The supervisory meeting record will be included as part of the annual monitoring process of postgraduate research student progress.
73. The supervisory meeting record may be referred to in the event of an appeal or complaint

MONITORING AND PROGRESSION

Annual Progression and Independent Review

74. The progress of students must be formally reviewed before the start of each new academic year by a monitoring panel arranged with the relevant PGR Coordinator and Scrutiny Panel. Students will be required to submit substantial written evidence which, while it is recognised that the format may vary depending on discipline and on what stage the student is at, should normally cover at least the following components:
 - a. a write up of recent work
 - b. reference to methodology and literature review
 - c. a draft chapter or other substantial piece of work towards the thesis objectives, and
 - d. a programme of planned work for the next 12 months
75. The monitoring panel will discuss the student's report and their supervisory team's summary of progress over the last year. The PGR Coordinator, in consultation with the DoS, will be responsible for ensuring the student has clear written instructions on what is expected by the monitoring panel.
76. * Key decision points such as project approval and transfer from MPhil to PhD should be incorporated into the annual monitoring cycle.
77. In addition to the monitoring panel (and where applicable the project approval and transfer), there should be a student experience review meeting between the student and an academic member of staff independent of their supervisory team arranged by the PGR Coordinator. This meeting (which should take place prior to the monitoring panel meeting) should focus on the student experience and may include such topics as quality of supervisory meetings, level of support provided, access to resources and the research environment.
78. The PGR co-ordinator will be responsible for appointing members of the monitoring panel and, at a minimum the panel must consist of members of the relevant Scrutiny Panel and academic staff with relevant expertise.

79. The panel will provide written feedback to the student. Where appropriate revisions to the report or additional written work may be required. The monitoring panel will prepare a joint report on the outcome, and the independent reviewer will additionally prepare a report on the student experience meeting for the PGR co-ordinator, to be submitted to Research, Innovation and Enterprise PGR administration.
80. If there are serious concerns about the progress of the student the panel may recommend that the student is placed on a 3 month probation period with an agreed action plan. If there is no improvement in the student's performance the panel should recommend to the Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC that the student's registration is terminated or require the student re-register for an MPhil.
81. Where the Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC confirms termination of registration or transfer to MPhil the student will have the right of appeal.
82. The Scrutiny Panel should review all the reports and the PGR co-ordinator should present the key findings to the Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC.

ASSESSMENT

Transfer of registration from MPhil to PhD

83. A student initially registered for MPhil with possibility of transfer to PhD, who has satisfactorily completed all applicable monitoring requirements and wishes to transfer to PhD, shall inform their hub PGR co-coordinator, after consultation with their DoS. Transfers will normally take place between 12-18 months of full-time study or 24-36 months of part-time study.
84. The Hub PGR co-ordinator shall convene a Transfer Panel which should consist of an independent Chair (who will be an experienced supervisor), and two active researchers who will be members of the Scrutiny Panel or be co-opted to provide appropriate discipline expertise. The assessors will normally be internal to the University. An external assessor may be appointed, on an exceptional basis, if approved by the Scrutiny Panel.
85. In support of the application, the candidate shall be required to submit evidence in the form of a full transfer report, plus other material subject to the nature of the research, and attend a viva voce at which they must successfully demonstrate their work has the potential to meet the learning outcomes of a level 8 award.⁵ While specific requirements may vary from discipline to discipline, a typical thesis based study should require a full transfer report of 10,000 - 20,000 words; whereas a practice-based project would normally require an artefact plus supporting document addressing the areas outlined below.
86. A full transfer report would normally take the form of a coherent document in the style of a thesis that includes the following chapters:

⁵ See QAA 'Framework for Higher Education Qualifications' (FHEQ)

- a. An introduction that sets out the contextual rationale to the work, and an appropriate set of aims and objectives;
 - b. A critical literature review that provides a comprehensive contextualisation of the research and demonstrates that by satisfying the aims of the project, an appropriate contribution to knowledge will be achieved;
 - c. A research methodology that demonstrates how the methods selected will achieve the desired aims and objectives and fully justifies the approach taken;
 - d. A presentation and consideration of any findings to date, including a demonstration of how the final results of the project will satisfy the requirements of the research in addressing the project aims; and
 - e. An outline of the subsequent steps necessary to complete the research, including a timetable of completion of the thesis from the date of initial registration; a progress report by the supervision team; and a chapter-by-chapter outline of the final thesis.
87. The Chair of the Transfer Panel will submit a report to the Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC with one of the following recommendations:-
- a. transfer to PhD;
 - b. the transfer report be referred back to the student for amendment and resubmission to the Transfer Panel within 3 months (full-time) or 6 months (part-time);
 - c. the student's registration to remain as MPhil; or
 - d. the student's registration be terminated.
88. Before approving transfer from MPhil to PhD, the Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC shall satisfy themselves that the candidate has made sufficient progress and that the assessors have determined that the proposed programme provides a suitable basis for work at PhD standard which the candidate is capable of pursuing to completion.
89. Following outcome b. above, the decisions available for the reconvened Transfer Panel will be a, c, or d.
90. A student who has been unsuccessful in their transfer may appeal the decision (refer to the appeal section within this policy).
91. A candidate registered for the degree of MPhil only may apply to transfer the registration to PhD. In such cases the candidate must comply with the transfer regulations.
92. A candidate who is registered for the degree of PhD and who is unable to complete the approved programme of work may, at any time prior to the submission of the thesis for examination, apply to the Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC for the registration to revert to that for MPhil, provided that the maximum permitted period for MPhil registration is not exceeded. Exceptionally, a student who has passed the MPhil/PhD transfer stage and is within their maximum period of PhD registration may request in writing – at the time of submitting their PhD thesis – that the thesis be considered for an MPhil.

EXAMINATION OF RESEARCH AWARDS

Submission of thesis

93. The submission of the thesis for examination or re-examination is at the sole discretion of the student⁶
94. Before submitting the student must ensure that the thesis:-
- a. is submitted electronically to the online submission tool Turnitin via the University's online learning platform and the report is included as part of the submission;
 - b. format and binding follows the university guidance;
 - c. is submitted within the registration period, or following a viva outcome of resubmission within the period granted for resubmission; and
 - d. is accompanied by the university's thesis declaration form, which requires a statement identifying :-
 - i. the aspects of the thesis which have already been published; or
 - ii. where published work has been jointly authored with others, which part(s) of the work(s) are the student's responsibility;
 - iii. any aspects of the thesis which have already been submitted for a degree or comparable award; and
 - iv. any other relevant statements.

Submission of creative work

95. Where the student's own creative work forms, as a point of origin or reference, a significant part of the intellectual enquiry, the presentation and submission may be partly in other than written form.
96. The final submission should be accompanied by some permanent record (for instance, video, photographic record, musical score, or diagrammatic representation) of the creative work and, where practicable, bound with the thesis.
97. The final submission should include a copy of the edited text(s) or collection of artefact(s), appropriate textual and explanatory annotations, and a substantial introduction and critical commentary which set the text in the relevant historical, theoretical or critical context. The thesis itself must conform to the usual scholarly requirements and be of an appropriate length.

EXAMINERS

⁶ While a student would be unwise to submit the thesis for examination against the advice of their supervisors, it is his/her right to do so. Equally, students should not assume that a supervisor's agreement to the submission of a thesis guarantees the award of the degree.

98. A student will be examined by at least two and not more than three examiners of whom at least one will be an external examiner. Internal examiners should have experience in the general area of the student's work. External examiners should have experience in the specialist area of the student's thesis and demonstrate a consistent and extensive record of relevant publication. The examination team as a whole should have substantial experience of successful supervision and examination of research degree students. Normally, the external examining team should have completed a minimum of two examinations.
99. Where the student is a member of the University staff the examiners must all be external.

Internal examiners

100. Where an internal examiner is part of the examining team they will not be a member of the student's supervisory team. An internal examiner should be completely independent of the student.

External examiners

101. An external examiner must be independent of the University and must not have acted previously as the student's supervisor or adviser, and must have no other conflict of interest involving the research student.
102. Former members of staff of the University should not be approved as external examiners until at least three years after the termination of their employment with the University. Where an internal examiner has recently left the University following a student's viva and the student is eligible to re-viva, their continuation in the role will normally be in the interests of the student.
103. A nomination for an external examiner who has been in formal collaboration, or who has authored a research paper, with a member of the supervisory team within the three years prior to the examination, would not normally be regarded as independent.

Appointment process

104. The DoS should submit for Scrutiny Panel approval proposals for the student's examiners at least six months before the expected thesis submission date. The student's examination may not take place until the arrangements have been approved. In special circumstances, the Scrutiny Panel may act directly to recommend examiners and arrange the examination of a student. The Scrutiny Panel recommendation should be approved by the Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC.
105. The Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC should ensure that the same external examiner is not approved so frequently that their familiarity with the University might prejudice objective judgement.
106. A research degree student registered at Solent or another University cannot act as an examiner.

EXAMINATION ARRANGEMENTS

107. The examination for the MPhil and PhD will have two stages: firstly preliminary assessment of the thesis and secondly its defence by oral or approved alternative examination.
108. Students wishing to submit their work for examination should notify the Research, Innovation and Enterprise PGR administration, who will provide guidance on process for the submission of the thesis (including the number of copies to be submitted for examination) and any conditions to be satisfied before the student may be considered eligible for examination.
109. Once the thesis is received and accompanied by a completed Turnitin report checking for academic misconduct, the date of the oral examination will be confirmed to the examiners, the student, all supervisors and an independent chair will be appointed.
110. PGR administration will send a copy of the thesis and the University's regulations to each examiner, together with the examiner's preliminary report pro-forma and instructions on how to complete it.
111. Each examiner should read and examine the thesis and submit an independent preliminary report before any oral or alternative form of examination is held. In completing the preliminary report, each examiner should consider whether the thesis provisionally satisfies the requirements of the degree and where possible make an appropriate provisional recommendation subject to the outcome of the oral examination.
112. The preliminary report forms are to be completed independently and without formal or informal consultation between examiners, whether external or internal. An examiner having received the thesis and wishing to contact another examiner, the student or any member of supervisory team should do so only through the PGR administration.
113. Once a thesis has been submitted, members of supervisory teams may not directly contact the examiners. Contact for any reason should be made only through PGR administration. Candidates may not directly contact their examiners between the appointments of the examination team until the final award is made and should have no involvement in the appointment of examiners or the arrangements for the oral examination.
114. External examiners are required to submit their reports at least five working days before the oral examination, which will be circulated to the examination panel. An examination cannot normally take place until a preliminary report has been received.

Conduct of the oral examination

115. A student will normally be examined orally on their thesis and on the field of study in which their research lies.

116. Where for reasons of disability or comparable valid cause the Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC is satisfied that a student would be under serious disadvantage if required to undergo an oral examination, an alternative form of examination may be approved. Such approval must not be given because the student's knowledge of the language in which the thesis is presented is inadequate.
117. The oral examination will be conducted by the examiners and will be chaired by an independent Chair from the register of independent chairs approved by RDC.
118. The role of the chair is to ensure that the examination is conducted with due regard to fair play and in compliance with these regulations. The chair also acts as a source of experience and guidance to the examiners about the conduct of the examination.
119. The oral examination will normally be held in the UK. In special cases, the Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC may give approval for the examination to take place abroad or via Skype.
120. One supervisor may, with the express written permission of the student, attend the oral examination. They may not contribute to the discussion.
121. Recording of the viva examination will not normally be permitted.

Outcomes of the examination

122. Following the oral examination the independent chair should require the examiners to complete the viva report forms and, where appropriate, that feedback is provided to the student. When the examiners have made their decision, they may elect to communicate it to the candidate immediately following the viva.
123. The chair will also oversee the completion of reports relating to minor or major revisions and will liaise with the externals about the action to be taken in response to any resubmission required of the student.
124. Where the examiners agree, the chair will submit a joint report on the appropriate form including the decision relating to the award of the degree. The preliminary reports and joint recommendation of the examiners should together provide sufficiently detailed comments on the scope and quality of the work to enable the Chair of RDC to be satisfied that the outcome chosen is correct. Where the examiners do not agree, separate reports and recommendations should be submitted.
125. Following the completion of the examination the examiners may decide that:-
 - a. the candidate be awarded the degree;
 - b. the candidate be awarded the degree subject to minor amendments being made to the thesis within 3 months to the satisfaction of the examiners;
 - c. the candidate be awarded the degree subject to major amendments being made to the thesis within 6 months to the satisfaction of the examiners;

- d. the candidate be re-examined subject to major amendments being made within 12 months to the thesis to the satisfaction of the examiners, without an oral examination;
 - e. the candidate be re-examined subject to major amendments being made within 12 months to the thesis to the satisfaction of the examiners, with an oral examination;
 - f. in the case of a PhD examination, the candidate be awarded the degree of MPhil subject to the presentation of the thesis within 6 months amended to the satisfaction of the examiners; or
 - g. the candidate not be awarded the degree and not be permitted to be re-examined.
126. In cases where the candidate does not achieve the assessment criteria for the award of PhD, the normal expectation is that the examiners will make one of the recommendations set out in para 125 b-e., each of which allows the candidate a further opportunity to satisfy the assessment criteria.
127. b. should be used where the requirements of the degree have been met, except that minor typographical and/or minor editorial amendments are needed and a re-examination is not required. Following the oral examination, these amendments will be stipulated by the examiner(s), on the guidance form, which will be sent to the candidate after the oral examination. These amendments must be completed by the candidate within three months from the day the list of amendments is sent. The amended thesis should be verified by one of the examiner(s) as stipulated on the recommendation form.
128. c. should be used where the requirements of the degree have been largely met, except that a major revision is needed to an aspect of the thesis. Following the oral examination, these amendments must be completed by the candidate within six months from the day the list of amendments is sent. The amended thesis should be verified by one of the examiner(s) as stipulated on the recommendation form.
129. d. should be used where, although the requirements of the degree have been partly met, the thesis contains major deficiencies, but the examiners believe with further work a satisfactory outcome can be achieved. Following the oral examination, the candidate will receive a written statement of the amendments required, signed by each examiner. The candidate must complete the amendments within twelve months from the date the written statement was sent. The amended thesis should be verified by one or more of the external examiner(s) as stipulated on the recommendation form without the need for a further oral examination.
130. e. should be used where, although the requirements of the degree have been partly met, the oral examination and/or the thesis contains major deficiencies, but the examiners believe with further work a satisfactory outcome can be achieved. Following the oral examination, the candidate will receive a written statement of the amendments required, signed by each examiner. The candidate must complete the amendments within 12 months from the date the written statement was sent. The amended thesis should be subject to a further oral examination.

131. f. should be used where the examiners identify major deficiencies with the thesis and do not consider that with further work a satisfactory outcome can be achieved, but that the student should be given the opportunity to demonstrate that they can meet the criteria for an MPhil award. The revised MPhil thesis should normally be submitted within 6 months and should be verified by one or more of the external examiner(s) as stipulated on the recommendation form without further oral examination.
132. g. should be used where the examiners believe that the deficiencies of the thesis are such that an award cannot be made. Where the sub-committee confirms that the degree should not be awarded and that no re-examination should be permitted, the examiners should prepare an agreed statement of the deficiencies of the thesis and the reason for their recommendation, which should be forwarded to the candidate.
133. Examiners may indicate informally their decision on the result of the examination to the candidate.

Monitoring of the examination

134. The Chair of RDC will consider the reports and decision(s) of the examiners in respect of the candidate, and where the examiners' recommendations for vivas and / or re-examinations are not unanimous, a sub-committee of RDC will confirm the outcome in line with the options below:
- a. accept a majority recommendation (if the majority recommendation includes at least one external examiner);
 - b. accept the recommendation of the external examiner; or
 - c. require the appointment of an additional external examiner.
- The sub-committee will be appointed by the Chair of RDC from the current membership of the RDC. The sub-committee will meet either in person or virtually via online mechanisms as required by the timing of individual viva examinations.
135. Where an additional external examiner is appointed, they should prepare an independent preliminary report on the basis of the thesis and, if considered necessary, may conduct a further oral examination within 2 months of appointment, which will be considered as part of the first examination. The additional examiner should not be informed of the recommendations of the other examiners. On receipt of the report from the additional examiner, the sub-committee of the RDC should make a decision.
136. RDC must ensure that all examinations are conducted and the recommendations of the examiners are presented wholly in accordance with the University's regulations. In any instance where the RDC is made aware of a failure to comply with all the procedures of the examination process, it may declare the examination null and void and appoint new examiners.

Posthumous awards

137. The degree of MPhil or PhD may be awarded posthumously on the basis of a thesis completed by a candidate that is ready for submission for examination. In such cases the RDC will seek

evidence that the candidate would have been likely to be successful had the oral examination taken place.

RE-EXAMINATION

138. One re-examination will be permitted by the RDC, subject to the following:-
- The original viva outcome was 125. d. or e. *'the candidate be re-examined subject to major amendments being made within 12 months to the thesis to the satisfaction of the examiners with or without an oral examination'*;
 - The student has been provided with written guidance on the deficiencies of the first submission; and
 - The form and nature of the re-examination has been agreed by the Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC. Where there is good cause a variation of the form of re-examination may be approved.
139. Where there is compelling evidence, the Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC may exceptionally approve an extension of this period.
140. RDC may require that an additional external examiner to be appointed for the re-examination.
141. Each examiner should read and examine the thesis and submit, on the appropriate form, an independent preliminary report before any oral or alternative form of examination is held. In completing the preliminary report, each examiner should consider whether the thesis provisionally satisfies the requirements of the degree and where possible make an appropriate provisional recommendation subject to the outcome of any oral examination.
142. Following the re-examination of the thesis, either including or excluding an oral or other examination as agreed by RDC the examiners may, where they agree, communicate it to the candidate. They must submit a joint report and decision on the appropriate form relating to the award of the degree. The preliminary reports and joint recommendation of the examiners should together provide sufficiently detailed comments on the scope and quality of the work to enable the Chair of RDC to be satisfied that the outcome chosen is correct.
143. Where the examiners do not agree, separate reports and recommendations should be submitted-
144. Following the completion of the re-examination the examiners may recommend that:-
- the candidate is awarded the degree;
 - the candidate is awarded the degree subject to minor amendments being made to the thesis within 2 months;
 - the candidate be awarded the degree of MPhil subject to the presentation of the thesis within 6 months amended to the satisfaction of the examiners; or
 - the candidate is not awarded the degree and is not permitted to be re-examined.

*Note: The candidate **cannot** be awarded the degree subject to major amendment after re-examination.*

145. Where the examiners are satisfied that the candidate has in general reached the standard required for the degree, but consider that minor typographical and/or minor editorial amendments are needed they may recommend that the degree be awarded subject to the candidate amending the thesis to the satisfaction of one or more of the examiner(s). In this case they should indicate to the candidate in writing what amendments and corrections are required. These amendments must be completed by the candidate within two months from the day the list of amendments is sent. The amended thesis should be verified by one of the examiner(s) as stipulated on the recommendation form.
146. Where the examiners identify major deficiencies with the thesis at re-examination the candidate cannot be re-examined subject to further major amendments, but the examiners may consider it appropriate for the student to be given the opportunity to demonstrate that they can meet the criteria for an MPhil award. The revised MPhil thesis should normally be submitted within 6 months and should be verified by one or more of the external examiner(s) as stipulated on the recommendation form without further oral examination.
147. Where the examiners believe that the deficiencies of the thesis are such that an award cannot be made and the sub-committee confirms that the degree should not be awarded, the examiners should prepare an agreed statement of the deficiencies of the thesis and the reason for their recommendation, which should be forwarded to the candidate by PGR administration.
148. Where the examiners' recommendations are not unanimous, the sub-committee of RDC will-
 - a. Accept a majority recommendation (provided that the majority recommendation includes at least one external examiner);
 - b. Accept the recommendation of the external examiner; or
 - c. Require the appointment of an additional external examiner.
149. Where an additional external examiner is appointed they should prepare an independent preliminary report on the basis of the thesis and, if considered necessary, may conduct a further oral examination within 2 months of the original re-examination. That examiner should not be informed of the recommendations of the other examiners. On receipt of the report from the additional examiner, the sub-committee RDC will determine the outcome.

Illness during a transfer, examination or re-examination

150. Where a student is ill during their transfer, viva examination or re-examination they must notify the University, providing documentary evidence, and the University will reschedule the examination.

APPEALS

First stage

151. An appeal can only be lodged by the student and cannot be made by a third party, unless at the time the appeal is lodged the student is suffering from such physical or mental incapacity so as to prevent the student acting for themselves.
152. A candidate may make a formal appeal to the Head of Compliance, Academic Services, to request reconsideration of academic decisions, that is:-
 - a. a decision to withdraw a student through lack of academic progress and/or failure to engage;
 - b. a decision to suspend a student due to ill health; or
 - c. the outcomes of an examination (including MPhil transfer) decisions.
153. If a student is dissatisfied about other aspects of their experience, including withdrawal for non-payment of fees, they should use the complaint procedure.
154. An appeal may only be made on the grounds indicated below:-
 - a. the student's level of achievement was adversely affected by illness or other factors which they were unable to divulge to the supervisory team or the examiners at the appropriate time;
 - b. there is new and relevant information that was not available to be considered at the time of the original decision;
 - c. there has been a material irregularity in the conduct of progress reviews of the candidate undertaken by a Scrutiny Panel;
 - d. there has been a material administration error in the arrangements and/or conduct of the examination, such as to cause doubt on the validity of the examiners' decision; or
 - e. the student believes unfair discrimination has occurred.
155. Disagreement with the academic judgement of supervisors, examiners or RDC cannot in itself constitute grounds for appeal.
156. Given the existence of procedures for complaints available to students during their study, together with the monitoring arrangements for research candidates, alleged inadequacy of supervisory or other arrangements during the period of study will not constitute grounds for appeal against an academic judgement.
157. The time limit for lodging the appeal with Academic Services is 20 (twenty) working days from the date of the communication indicating termination/ re-registration or notification of an examination decision. Appeals outside this time will be considered only at the discretion of the Chair/Deputy Chair of RDC and the Academic Registrar (or nominee).
158. Academic Services will inform the student, the Director of Studies and PGR administration within 10 working days of the receipt of the appeal application and the outcome of the initial assessment, which are limited to:-

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- a. the appeal is made on permitted grounds, the prima facie case has been accepted and the matter will be referred to a Postgraduate Research Student Appeal Panel;
 - b. the case is referred back to the student as not eligible, as the application is not made on the permitted grounds and/or there is insufficient evidence contained within the appeal. In such circumstances the student will be advised to seek help from Student Services or the Students' Union; or
 - c. the case is not eligible under the appeals process, but can be considered as a complaint and will be treated as such by the University.
159. Where a prima facie case is found to exist a Postgraduate Research Student Appeals Panel will be appointed and a hearing set up. Any such hearing will be scheduled to take place within 15 working days of notifying the student, unless a delay is requested by the student.
160. The Postgraduate Research Student Appeals Panel will comprise:-
- a. one staff member of RDC, independent of the research hub the student is based in, who will be the chair; and
 - b. two research active members of staff.
161. The student will be invited to attend the panel and may be accompanied by a friend⁷ or Student Union representative and will be provided with copies of the documentation presented to the panel.
162. Staff members responsible for the decision being appealed will be invited to submit relevant documentation and will be invited to attend the panel to respond to the applicant's appeal.
163. Academic Services will ensure that the relevant parties and the Postgraduate Research Student Appeal Panel are provided with all appropriate information at least 10 days prior to the hearing. Final evidence will be circulated at least 5 working days before the hearing. Late evidence may be circulated only with the consent of both parties.
164. Should the candidate not attend the hearing, it will proceed with the candidate 'in absentia' and on the information already supplied unless a documented genuine reason for absence is received. In the latter case the hearing date may be re-arranged.
165. The Panel will decide that:-
- a. the appeal is rejected, and the panel will give its reasons; or
 - b. the appeal is upheld and the panel will make recommendations on the appropriate action to take.
166. Academic Services will communicate the panel's decision to the candidate in writing within 10 working days of the date of any hearing with a copy to the PGR administration.

⁷ The definition of friend excludes professional representation, unless the case is made that this would not be natural justice.

Second stage

167. Where a student is dissatisfied by the outcome or process they may submit a second stage appeal within 10 working days asking for the decision and/ or process to be reviewed by the Chair of RDC (or their nominee in their absence) and a member of RDC not previously involved with the student.
168. The chair of RDC and RDC member will review the evidence and may interview the student and/or member of staff and examiners, and will determine if the process followed was fair, transparent and robust and the outcome and recommendations appropriate. The student and Director of Studies will be informed of the Chair and RDC member's decision within 20 days of Academic Services receiving the appeal.
169. Where the Chair and RDC member uphold the original outcome and recommendations the University will issue a completion of procedures letter, which includes the details of how to appeal to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.
170. Where the Chair and RDC member do not uphold the original outcome and recommendations, they will determine the appropriate action(s), taking into account the student's desired outcomes. If the student does not accept the proposed actions the University will issue a completion of procedures letter.

COMPLAINTS

171. Where a student is dissatisfied with their learning experience or with the services provided by the University they should use the students' complaint policy. (See section 2N of the Academic Handbook)

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

172. Southampton Solent University is committed to helping and supporting students understand the expectations associated with academic writing and provides advice, guidance and self-help material so that students can fully understand what is considered unacceptable behaviour. Students are expected, with the support provided by the University, to make themselves fully conversant with what constitutes good academic conduct and consequently academic misconduct.
173. In order to protect the standard and integrity of its awards, the University will identify any incidence that meets the definition of academic misconduct and will bring this to the attention of the student and where appropriate the University will impose an academic penalty under the Student Academic Misconduct Procedure (postgraduate research degrees) (See section 4L of the Academic Handbook).