

The Research Student Environment

Solent endeavours to provide a research environment which supports research students in doing and learning about research, in a setting where externally respected research is occurring.

This document outlines the ways in which the University provides an appropriate environment to support all research students to undertake and learn about research, and which encourages research achievement. It provides a statement of how the University's interprets and meets the requirements of the UK Quality Code B11 indicator 4.

Solent's research student environment

The University is committed to social justice and this is reflected in its approach to research and the support it provides for its range of research students. The diversity of the University's research clusters and groups underpins a rich array of research of applied and multi-disciplinary research. Research students, researchers and practitioners operate at the leading edge of their disciplines and enjoy connecting through clusters and groups, thus forming communities of practice. This has led to the establishment of circa 30 research clusters that reflect staff interests and expertise. Unifying themes across research clusters and groups emerge to meet specific drivers, for example 'sustainability and environmental impact' and 'health and well-being'. Research students are encouraged to engage with the most appropriate research cluster or clusters as an important aspect of their development into early career researchers and as active members of the research community. For further information: <http://www.solent.ac.uk/research/clusters-and-groups/clusters.aspx>.

The University recognises that given the relatively small yet growing size of the research student community and its very diverse nature, creating a sense of community and providing an environment for doing and learning about research is challenging. The University is committed to an on-going portfolio of enhancement activities building on sector good practice models and promoting the engagement of students and staff in the continued development of a vibrant community in which to support student research. The postgraduate research website can be accessed at <http://www.solent.ac.uk/research/postgraduate-research/postgraduate-research.aspx>

The increasingly applied nature of the doctorate and the strong competition in the job market has led to a transformation of the doctoral and the needs of doctoral students. Indeed, the doctoral journey is also now very much about self-realisation and improving the self. Therefore, the University is keen to offer support, both centrally and from within the research clusters and research disciplines, that enables research students to achieve successful academic, personal but also professional outcomes from their research degrees.

A good research student experience rests on the integration of the various elements of the research process across the different stages of the research student journey. Clearly central to this experience is the research supervisor-supervisee relationship but equally important are the other support functions including postgraduate research administrative support and the range of other student-facing services.

Faculty support

The faculties are primarily responsible for ensuring the appropriateness of all academic aspects of the research student environment including support for the acquisition of the range of research and personal skills that are likely to be needed by early career researchers. This is primarily supported through the research supervisor-supervisee relationship with additional layers of support through the research infrastructure including research clusters.

Cohort research skills support is provided through the University's Postgraduate Certificate in Research. All research students are expected to undertake and achieve this qualification, unless they can demonstrate as part of their training analysis previous achievement of the learning outcomes of the course.

As well as the supervisor and the supervisory team, the Faculty Director for PGR Students (FPGRS) is also an important component of the research support and guidance available for all research students within a Faculty. Working with Academic Services, the research supervisors and FPGRS ensure the implementation of the relevant policies and procedures. The Faculties also manage the research student centres and ensure appropriate IT provision, desk space and where required additional facilities and equipment, such as specialist software. Health and safety advice relevant to research, as well as opportunities for participating in conferences or explicit training activities are also discussed at faculty level.

Postgraduate research administration

The postgraduate research administration team, located in Academic Services coordinates the development and implementation of the University quality assurance and enhancement systems for postgraduate research provision. The Team provides administrative support for postgraduate research students and supervisors, and offer guidance for staff and potential applicants who wish to apply to study for a postgraduate research degree at the University. The team work directly with FPGRS and with the course leader for the Postgraduate Certificate in Research and with Nottingham Trent University, the degree awarding body, to co-ordinate the various aspects of the postgraduate research student journey. The team also supports the promotion of good practice across the University ensuring both quality and consistency in approach and experience for PGR students.

The postgraduate research administration team's main duties are to:

- act as a point of liaison for student administrative matters
- provide information about postgraduate research degree programmes and the processes which supports it including managing the research student web and portal pages
- offer advice and support to students and supervisors
- ensure adequate links between the Research Degrees Committee (RDC), the Research & Enterprise Committee (REC), University Ethics Committee (UEC) and Intellectual Property Advisory Panel (IPAP)
- support the enhancement of the research environment for research students including managing the annual Research & Enterprise conference, coordinating and contributing to the training sessions for new supervisors and independent chairs, providing the initial 'meet and greet' for new research students, and supporting

on-going enhancement activities in association with staff, students and external agencies including VITAE

Academic quality

The University is committed to ensuring the quality of the doctoral learning experience and the infrastructure aligns with the QAA UK Quality Code - Chapter B11 (Research Degrees) and the QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualification (FHEQ).

Academic Services is responsible for maintaining and enhancing a series of Policies, Procedures and a Code of Practice for postgraduate research degrees available at <http://portal.solent.ac.uk/support/support-with-research/postgraduate-research-support/postgraduate-research-support.aspx>. The Code is supported by Guidance Notes designed specifically to provide staged student and staff-facing guidance on each aspect of the research student journey. All policies and procedures can be found in the University Academic Handbook.

The guidance notes support the following stages:

- #1. Key principles and institutional arrangements
- # 2. Roles and responsibilities / managing the supervisory relationship
- # 3. Admissions & registration
- # 4. Project approval
- # 5. Transfer (from MPhil registration to PhD)
- #6. Annual monitoring
- #7. Submission and examination

Academic Services provides additional guidance on:

- #8. Misconduct, appeals and complaints
- # 9. Students studying under a tier 4 student visa

Students are central to University processes for monitoring, reviewing and enhancing the research student experience at Solent. The research degree student body is represented on key committees, including the Research and Enterprise Committee, the Research Degrees Committee, and the University Ethics Committee. The Research Degrees Committee has a standing agenda item dedicated to research degree student matters.

Student Support

There are various support services and resources at Southampton Solent University which recognise the distinctive nature of research degree study and the needs of research students:

Library

Students can access a wide variety of support via the library and Learning Services. As well as accessing a range of print and electronic resources subscribed to by the library, students can gain access to materials held elsewhere via Inter-Library Loans or the SCONUL Access Scheme. Students can book appointments with dedicated information librarians to discuss research requirements and get advice on a number of issues ranging from online searching and referencing to open access publishing.

Further information is available on the portal via <http://portal.solent.ac.uk/library/help/factsheets/resources/library-services-research-postgrad.pdf>. Research students can access learning skills advice online via *Succeed@Solent*, tutorials (<http://mycourse.solent.ac.uk/succeed>), or book individual appointments with Dr Carina Buckley, Learning Skills Tutor.

Support for a range of IT applications is available from the Learning Resource Centres, either in person or via the IT and Media portal pages (<http://portal.solent.ac.uk/it-and-media/it-and-media.aspx>).

Online resources

Research students have a dedicated space on the VLE, myCourse. The space acts as a dashboard from which students can access internal resources such as policies, procedures and forms, as well as external resources such as access to the VITAE website and the Research Professional funding opportunity database. This is managed by the postgraduate research administration team.

The 'one-stop-shop' approach under the brand 'Students 1st
<http://portal.solent.ac.uk/support/students-1st/students-1st.aspx>

These student support services cover a wide range of areas, such as: study skills, accommodation, careers and employability, disability and learning difficulties, equality and access, faith, finance, health and wellbeing, appeals and complaints, and international studies.

The Students' Union
<http://www.solentsu.co.uk/>

The Students' Union supports students through its representation activities, in particular where impartial advice is critical. While working closely with the University, the Students' Union operates independently and this is reflected in the support they are able to provide.