

The University of Edinburgh

**Meeting of the Senatus Researcher Experience Committee
to be held on Friday 20 April 2018 at 2pm
in the Hodgson Room, Weir Building, King's Buildings
Convener: Dr Antony Maciocia**

A G E N D A

- | | | |
|-----------|--|--------------------------|
| 1 | Minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2018 | Enclosed |
| 2 | Matters Arising | |
| 3 | Convener's Communications | |
| | 3.1 Interim Committee Convenership Arrangements | |
| | 3.2 PGR Space – Old Kirk Project update | |
| | For Discussion | |
| 4 | Enlightenment Scholarships | |
| 5 | Authorised Interruption of Study Policy – Update | REC 17/18 4A |
| 6 | Student status | |
| 7 | PhD with Integrated Study | REC 17/18 4B |
| 8 | Withdrawal and Exclusion from Study procedure for postgraduate research students | REC 17/18 4C |
| 9 | Code of Practice for Supervisors & Research Students – new publication draft (and design) | REC 17/18 4D |
| 10 | Committee achievements 2017/18 | REC 17/18 4E |
| 11 | Senate Committee Planning | REC 17/18 4F |
| | For information and formal business | |
| 12 | Excellence in Doctoral Research & Career Development: | |
| | 12.1 Progress report on work stream 1: Supervisor Training and Support | |
| | 12.2 Progress report on work stream 2: Mentoring and Wellbeing | |
| 13 | Service Excellence, Student Administration & Support Update | REC 17/18 4G |
| 14 | Associated Institutions update | REC 17/18 4H
- Closed |
| 15 | Knowledge Strategy Committee report: 19 January 2018 meeting | REC 17/18 4I |
| 16 | Research Policy Group report | |
| 17 | Any other business | |
| | 17.1 Conferences and events | |
| | 16.1.1 LERU April meeting (NM) | |
| | 16.1.2 Russell Group PGR Special Interest Group (PH) | |
| | 17.2 LERU Doctoral Summer School | |

Susan Hunter, Academic Services, 12 April 2018

Date of next meeting: 27 June 2018, Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House

The University of Edinburgh

Researcher Experience Committee

20 April 2018

Authorised Interruption of Study Policy – Update

Executive Summary

This paper provides an overview of the Authorised Interruption of Study Working Group's work to date and outlines the key points of the policy.

How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?

This paper aligns with the University strategic objective of leadership in learning through fostering diversity and inclusion.

Action requested

For discussion – Committee members are invited to discuss and provide their views on the draft policy.

How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?

The working group will provide a draft communication and implementation plan in addition to any final proposals for CSPC approval.

Resource / Risk / Compliance

1. Resource implications (including staffing)

This paper has no resource implications as it has been submitted for discussion purposes at this time.

2. Risk assessment

The proposals present no significant risks.

3. Equality and Diversity

Equality and diversity issues will continue to be addressed in future discussions and in advance of producing a final policy for approval.

4. Freedom of information

Open

Key words Authorised Interruption of Study, Concession

Originator of the paper

Ms Roshni Hume, Academic Services 03 April 2018

Authorised Interruption of Study – Update

Overview:

A working group was set up in response to a recommendation, resulting from the Review of Support for Disabled Students to develop a University- wide policy for Authorised Interruption of Study.

There is currently minimal regulation of Authorised Interruption of Study at University level. An initial survey of the information the University provides regarding Authorised Interruption of Study highlighted the following:

- There is a lack of information at University-level regarding acceptable grounds for requesting an Authorised Interruption of Study.
- There is a lack of clarity regarding the status and rights of students who are interrupted.
- There is a lack of guidance or information for staff and students regarding the reintegration of interrupted students.
- There are varying practices between Colleges particularly in relation to the consistency of advice and guidance provided to students across the University and the level at which applications are considered and approved.

Progress:

The Authorised Interruption of Study working group met on two occasions in November 2017 and December 2017 and a draft policy has been developed which encompasses both taught and research students (Appendix 1).

The key points from the draft policy are as follows:

- Authorised Interruptions of Study will be approved where the request supports successful completion of a student's programme, or supports a student's career aspirations.
- Students may not apply for an Authorised Interruption of Study during examination periods as there is an expectation that any issues which arise during this time will be managed through the Special Circumstances procedure or under existing regulations relating to religious observance and elite sporting participation.
- Students may be asked to provide evidence to determine whether an Authorised Interruption of Study is in the best interest of a student.
- Personal Tutors and Supervisors will be asked to provide a supporting statement on a student's application for an Authorised Interruption of Study.
- Decisions on requests from Taught students will be **devolved to Schools**, with the Senior Tutor (usually) making the decision. This is currently managed at College level across the University. It is anticipated that wider consultation will help to determine whether Schools have the capacity to implement this change.

- Decisions on requests from Research students will remain at College level.
- The policy provides clarity that students who are on an interruption of study are entitled to access support services, libraries etc. Students are also able to request access to learning materials but are not obliged to engage with their studies whilst interrupted. As a part of this, it is expected that students would also have access to ongoing support from their Personal Tutors or Supervisors, if required.
- Students are able to request an extension to their period of interruption if they are unable to return to their studies at the originally authorised date.
- Personal Tutors and Supervisors are asked to make contact with students prior to their return to discuss and implement any support required ahead of their return to study.
- Students may also be asked to provide evidence of fitness to return where a student has taken an interruption due to ill health and is enrolled on a professional degree programme or is required to work in high risk environments e.g. in laboratories handling dangerous chemicals or substances.
- This policy will supersede the Authorised Interruption of Study or Extension of Study – Postgraduate Research Working Guidelines
(<https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/pgrinterruption.pdf>)

Committee members are invited to discuss and provide opinion on the draft policy and the key points outlined above.

Next Steps:

Consultation

A consultation paper is to be circulated to School Directors of Teaching and Senior Tutors to gather comments on the draft policy and proposed key changes.

Final Report & Draft Policy

A final report and draft policy to be submitted for approval at the May 2018 meeting of CSPC.

Roshni Hume
March 2018



Authorised Interruption of Study

Purpose of Policy

The policy ensures that consistency is applied to all requests from students wishing to take an authorised interruption of study and ensures that students are provided with a consistent level of support upon return to study.

Overview

The policy provides a definition of authorised interruption of study, outlines the application, consideration and approval processes. It also provides information on the status of student whilst they are interrupted and the return to study process.

Scope: Mandatory Policy

The policy is relevant to all undergraduate and postgraduate students seeking or taking an authorised interruption of study. The policy also applies to staff who are involved in supporting, considering and approving requests for students wishing to interrupt their study.

Contact Officer

Roshni Hume

Academic Policy Officer

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Document control

Dates	Approved: DD.MM.YY	Starts: DD.MM.YY	Equality impact assessment: DD.MM.YY	Amendments: DD.MM.YY	Next Review: YYYY/YYYY
Approving authority	Curriculum and Student Progression Committee (CSPC)				
Consultation undertaken	Curriculum and Student Progression Committee (CSPC)				
Section responsible for policy maintenance & review	Academic Services				
Related policies, procedures, guidelines & regulations	DRPS				
UK Quality Code	UK Quality Code Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement				
Policies superseded by this policy	Authorised Interruption of Study or Extension of Study – Postgraduate Research				
Alternative format	If you require this document in an alternative format please email Academic.Services@ed.ac.uk or telephone 0131 651 4490.				
Keywords	Authorised Interruption of Study, Suspension of Study, Leave of Absence				



Authorised Interruption of Study

1. Introduction

1.1 The University is committed to supporting students who require time away from their studies, where this will assist them in gaining the best possible outcome in their studies, or support their career aspirations.

2. Definition of Authorised Interruption of Study

2.1 Where a student is temporarily unable to engage with their studies, they may apply for an authorised interruption of study. Common reasons for authorised interruption include, but are not limited to:

- Health reasons (including mental health)
- Maternity/Paternity/Adoption/Family Leave
- Extra-curricular pursuits e.g. elite sport, art/music related opportunities
- Employment Opportunities
- Financial circumstances
- Personal reasons
- Military Service

2.2 During a period of interruption, students are not enrolled on courses at the University. Students are not obliged to engage with their studies whilst interrupted. Students who are interrupted can request to maintain access to study materials via their Personal Tutor/Supervisor.

2.3 Any one period of interruption of study will not exceed one academic year, unless authorised by the College due to exceptional circumstances. The total period of authorised interruption of study permitted for an individual student is the same for full-time and part-time students and will not exceed 100% of the prescribed period of full-time study for the relevant programme (for example, four years for an undergraduate Honours degree).

2.4 Students should note that there are separate regulations for those wishing to take a laigh year:

https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/laigh_year_regulations.pdf

2.5 Students are expected to re-engage with their studies following their return from an interruption.

3. Initial Considerations

3.1 Students should be aware that taking an authorised interruption of study may have financial and visa implications.

3.2 The Edinburgh University Students' Association Advice Place can provide independent advice to students regarding requests for authorised interruption of study and the potential



Authorised Interruption of Study

implications. Further information is available at:

https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/support_and_advice/the_advice_place/

3.3 The International Student Advisory Service can provide advice and guidance to students in relation to any visa implications which may arise as a consequence of taking an authorised interruption of study. Further information is available at:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/global/student-advisory-service>

3.4 The University's Scholarships and Student Funding department can provide advice and information to students in relation to any finance and funding issues which may arise as result of taking an authorised interruption of study. Further information is available at:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-funding>

3.5 Postgraduate Research students studying with the support of a Research Council or other funding body should contact their funder to ensure that the student is aware of any implications of taking an authorised interruption of study upon their funding.

4. Requesting an Authorised Interruption of Study

4.1 Students are strongly advised to liaise with their Personal Tutor or Supervisor before completing an application for an authorised interruption of study.

4.2 Undergraduate and postgraduate taught students may only apply for an authorised interruption of study during periods of teaching or vacation periods (i.e. not during examination periods). Where undergraduate or taught postgraduate students are unable to study due to circumstances beyond their control during an examination period, they should request consideration through the Special Circumstances process (https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/special_circumstances.pdf).

4.3 Postgraduate research students may apply for an authorised interruption of study at any stage during the academic year.

4.4 In order to apply for an authorised interruption of study, a student should complete the relevant form and submit this to their Personal Tutor (undergraduate and postgraduate taught students) or Postgraduate Supervisor (postgraduate research students). The form is available at:

5. Evidence

5.1 Schools and Colleges may require students to submit evidence to support applications for authorised interruption of study. The relevant School or College will advise students where this is the case.

6. Confidentiality

6.1 All requests will be treated as confidential in accordance with the University's Data Protection Policy, and information will only be shared with individuals who have a legitimate reason for being informed.



Authorised Interruption of Study

7. Consideration and Approval

7.1 The relevant Personal Tutor or Supervisor should provide comments in support of the application or state why they do not believe that an authorised interruption of study would be in the best interest of the student.

Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught students

7.2 The Personal Tutor will submit the form to the Senior Tutor (or other authorising officer appointed by the relevant Head of School) in the School which owns the student's programme who will determine whether or not an authorised interruption of study will be offered to the student.

Postgraduate Research students

7.3 The Postgraduate Supervisor will submit the form to the relevant College Office for consideration and decision by the relevant Dean or Committee with responsibility for postgraduate research students.

All students

7.4 The relevant School or College will notify the student and their Personal Tutor or Supervisor of the decision via e-mail within 10 working days of the application being received and if approved, ensure that the student record is updated.

8. Student Status/Rights and Responsibilities

8.1 Students taking an Authorised Interruption of Study continue to be regarded as current students of the University during the period of interruption. During an interruption, students have the right to access relevant campus facilities, e-mail and student support services including the Students' Association, Library Services, Chaplaincy, Student Counselling and Student Disability Services.

8.2 The relevant Personal Tutor or Postgraduate Supervisor will continue to provide support and guidance on request while a student is interrupted.

8.3 Students wishing to return to their studies earlier than originally planned should submit a request via the relevant School or College Office for consideration. Requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

8.4 Students remain subject to the Code of Student Conduct during a period of interruption.

9. Return to Study



Authorised Interruption of Study

- 9.1 The relevant Personal Tutor or Postgraduate Supervisor will make contact with an interrupted student 6 weeks before their scheduled return to study in order to arrange and facilitate any support which may be required upon return.
- 9.2 The University has a responsibility to ensure that students are able to return to study after a period of interruption. Therefore, to ensure that a return to study is in the best interest of the student, the relevant School or College may ask students to provide evidence of their ability to return to study e.g. students who are enrolled on professional degree programmes or those who are required to work within a high risk environment, handling dangerous materials or substances. The relevant School or College will be able to advise on whether evidence is required, in general or on a case-by-case basis.
- 9.3 Evidence of fitness to return to study will be required from all students enrolled on professional degree programmes or those who are required to work within a high risk environment e.g. laboratories where dangerous materials or substances are handled.
- 9.4 Students who are unable to return to study after a period of authorised interruption are able to request an extension to the period of authorised interruption of study, provided that this does not exceed the maximum allowable total period of interruption (see section 2.3). Students should contact their Personal Tutor or Supervisor to arrange this.

10. Changes to Programme

- 10.1 Students taking an authorised interruption of study should be aware that courses and programmes may be subject to change while they are interrupted and that they may return to an altered programme structure.
- 10.2 In interrupting their studies students consent to any programme or course changes which may occur while they are interrupted.
- 10.3 Student should be aware that in exceptional circumstances if their programme is to be discontinued, it may not be possible to grant an authorised interruption of study.

10 Further Guidance

10.2 Further guidance on authorised interruption of study and the relevant application form is available on the following webpage:

Insert latest date approved/amended

The University of Edinburgh
Senate Researcher Experience Committee
20 April 2018

**PhD with Integrated Study:
Assessment guidance for new programmes**

Executive Summary

The paper provides proposals for guidance on how PhD with Integrated Study programmes fit within the existing regulatory framework in terms of academic assessment. It aims to help Schools in setting up new PhD with Integrated Study programmes within Centres for Doctoral Training.

How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?

The paper aligns with the University's Strategic Plan Objective of Leadership in Learning and the committee's aim of promoting an outstanding student experience.

Action requested

REC is invited to consider the proposed guidance for approval.

How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?

If agreed, Academic Services will disseminate the guidance to Colleges for communication to Schools.

Resource / Risk / Compliance

1. Resource implications (including staffing)

The guidance will assist Schools to make more effective use of their resources, by removing the need for them to come up with solutions for practical issues.

2. Risk assessment

No risk assessment is included as the proposal aims to support existing practice. However, there may be risk attached if clearly defined progress monitoring and assessment procedures for postgraduate research students as set out in the expectations of the UK Quality Code are not in place.

3. Equality and Diversity

No equality and diversity implications are identified as the guidance is associated with existing practice and policy, and does not introduce any new policy. However ensuring consistency and accessibility of information regarding the requirements of these programmes would be expected to benefit all equality groups.

4. Freedom of information

The paper is **open**.

Originator of the paper

Susan Hunter, Academic Services, 27 February 2018

PhD with Integrated Study: proposed framework for new programmes

Background

At its December 2017 meeting (paper REC 17/18 2J), REC noted that Schools had highlighted issues with practical operation of PhD with Integrated Study programmes. There was a lack of clarity on structure, obtaining credit and mandatory training elements of these programmes. REC asked Academic Services to obtain feedback from Schools on their experiences of PhD with Integrated Study to understand challenges and whether any guidance and amendments to regulations would be beneficial. This paper proposes guidance on how PhD with Integrated Study programmes fit within the existing regulatory framework in terms of academic assessment.

Consultation

Following consultation with the Colleges, feedback was obtained from the Colleges of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine and Science and Engineering (the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences do not currently have any PhD with Integrated Study programmes). Colleges reported that these programmes are providing good student experience. This includes positive cohort experience and strengthening links with research partners.

Colleges did however report that, to support a continued, consistent student experience, Schools would benefit from clarity regarding how to approach the setting up of new Centre for Doctoral Training (CDT) provision and new PhD with Integrated Study Programmes. For example, how taught elements will be assessed and how they relate to student progression monitoring. The Research Support Office advise that, currently the Research Councils do not make stipulations about how PhD with Integrated Study programmes are structured and delivered.

In addition to assessment and progression, Colleges also reported challenges with collaborative arrangements for cohort-based doctoral study and with registering students for courses across Colleges. These are not discussed in this paper which deals with the existing regulatory framework in terms of academic assessment.

Additional guidance

The existing Taught Assessment Regulations and Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees already provide an appropriate assessment framework for PhD with Integrated Study.

There are particular aspects of the regulatory framework listed below, which should be helpful for colleagues involved in the development and delivery of PhD with Integrated Study programmes:

- Programmes should have a Degree Programme Table, which should set out all compulsory taught / research skills courses;
- All compulsory taught / research skills courses should be defined in terms of SCQF credit levels and volumes and be examined by a Board of Examiners under the Taught Assessment Regulations.
- Progress with compulsory taught / research skills elements should be reviewed as part of the student's annual progression review.
- If taught / research skills elements are required for progression, students must either have the opportunity to redeem failed courses either by 'credit on aggregate' via access to a defined number of resits and the right of appeal as provided by the Taught Assessment Regulations. Programme information should explain how these arrangements will operate.
- Requirements for progression should be made clear, for example in the Programme Handbook or Degree Programme Table
- Arrangements for exit awards must be made clear, for example in the Programme Handbook.
- Achievement of assessed taught / research skills courses needs to be recorded in EUCLID to allow inclusion on PGR HEAR.
- In addition to any compulsory taught / research skills courses, it is acceptable for integrated PhD programmes to offer students the opportunity to take a wider range of non-compulsory research and professional skills development activities. If these are SCQF credit-bearing they would be subject to the University's Taught Assessment Regulations and to the same points about redeeming failure and recording in EUCLID.
- All the above applies irrespective of whether the taught / research skills courses are delivered by Edinburgh or a partner institution. However, in some circumstances, the partner institution's assessment regulations may apply (where this has been agreed by the institutions).

Academic Services believes that the current regulations provide an appropriate assessment framework as well as flexibility for developing different degree programme structures. Therefore no changes to the regulations are currently indicated, however we will continue to monitor the development of this type of programme and Research Councils' intentions for them.

This proposed guidance is intended to support Schools when they are establishing new PhD with Integrated Study programmes. Once Schools have established this approach for new programmes it may then be beneficial for them to review practice in relation to existing PhD with Integrated Study programmes.

Susan Hunter, Academic Services
27 February 2018

REC: 20.04.18
H/02/26/02

REC 17/18 4C

The University of Edinburgh
Researcher Experience Committee
20 April 2018

Exclusion of postgraduate research students for unsatisfactory academic progress

Executive Summary

At its January meeting, REC agreed that content relating to “Exclusion from Study for Unsatisfactory Academic Performance” from the Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students should be moved to the Procedure for Withdrawal and Exclusion from Studies. This paper outlines the existing content, and seeks clarification from REC regarding some of the provisions within it.

How does this align with the University / Committee’s strategic plans and priorities?

This paper aligns with the University strategic objective of leadership in learning by providing fair and transparent processes for assessing students’ academic progress.

Action requested

For discussion: Committee members are requested to discuss and advise on the proposed course of action.

How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?

Senate Curriculum and Student Progression Committee would be asked to approve any recommended changes to the Procedure for Withdrawal and Exclusion from Studies. Any changes to the procedure would be communicated via Academic Services “new and updated policies” email in June, and in briefings for staff with responsibility for postgraduate research.

Resource / Risk / Compliance

1. Resource implications (including staffing)

This paper has no resource implications. Any changes to the Procedure for Withdrawal and Exclusion from Studies would reflect existing practice within the Colleges.

2. Risk assessment

The proposals present no significant risks.

3. Equality and Diversity

The paper does not propose a change in policy, and should not entail any new equality and diversity implications.

4. Freedom of information

Open

Key words: Exclusion, academic progress, postgraduate research

Originator of the paper

Dr Adam Bunni, Academic Services, 11th April 2018

Exclusion of postgraduate research students for unsatisfactory academic progress

Background

At its January meeting, REC agreed that content relating to “Exclusion from Study for Unsatisfactory Academic Performance” (Appendix 1) from the Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students (the “Code”) should be moved to the Procedure for Withdrawal and Exclusion from Studies (the “Procedure”- Appendix 2). The Procedure is a mandatory document applying to all students.

This paper requests clarification from REC regarding certain aspects of the existing content of the Code, and how they should be treated in the Procedure.

Code of Practice Vs Procedure

The existing content from the Code of Practice is provided in Appendix 1. This text appears to conflate several scenarios relating to unsatisfactory academic progress among research students, which are discussed below.

1. Failure to submit the thesis by the end of the maximum period of study (extended or otherwise)

This scenario is already covered in the Procedure at sections 28-30, “Exclusion for lapse of time”.

29. Research postgraduate students must submit their thesis within 12 months of their prescribed period of study (excluding any periods of interruption of studies). Students who fail to submit a thesis by the deadline specified by the regulations will be excluded.

30. A research postgraduate who has been examined but not carried out the required corrections or re-submission within one month of the maximum timescale stipulated by the relevant exam committee will be excluded.

It is therefore recommended that no amendment need be made to the Procedure to accommodate this. **REC is asked to endorse this approach.**

2. Failure to meet progression requirements, i.e. an Annual Progression Review recommending exclusion

Postgraduate Assessment Regulation for Research Degrees 14 states that exclusion may be a recommendation from an annual progression review, with 14.3 referring to the Procedure for additional information. Sections 9-16 of the Procedure, relating to “Exclusion for unsatisfactory academic progress” provide relevant content, but are more appropriate to taught programmes, as they may give an unrealistic expectation to students of the likelihood of being able to continue on programme despite a recommendation of exclusion from an annual progression review.

It may be beneficial to include an additional section in the Procedure relating specifically to research students whose exclusion has been recommended following annual progression review. The expectation is that such a section would refer to students being offered an interview by the relevant College committee, as per the existing content in the Code. **REC is asked to advise** whether including this additional section in the Procedure would be desirable.

If so, **REC is asked to advise** on the detail of the College interview process (taking account of existing practice within the Colleges), especially with regard to the range of stated outcomes from such an interview.

3. Recommendation by supervisor(s) that a student should be excluded from study

The text in the Code of Practice appears to suggest that supervisors may recommend to their Head of School (or nominee) that a research student should be excluded from study for unsatisfactory academic progress at any time, even where the student has not yet failed an annual progression review. Where the Head of School (or nominee) supports such a recommendation, this is considered by the relevant College committee.

The annual review process is a robust and transparent mechanism for considering research students' academic progress, so it is proposed that the presumption should be that any recommendation to exclude a student should come about through this process. Prior to annual review, Schools would be encouraged to seek to support students in addressing any issues with their academic progress prior to a formal annual review.

However, **REC is asked to comment** on whether it wishes to retain an exceptional mechanism whereby Schools could recommend the exclusion of a student to College, prior to an annual review. Should REC wish to include text relating to such an option in the Procedure, **REC is asked to advise** on whether the process set out in the Code is appropriate (giving due consideration to existing practice within Colleges), and what the range of outcomes from an interview with College would be.

It should be noted that the Procedure already includes the provision to exclude students for non-attendance, where they have not engaged with their studies:

18. Students are required to undergo assessments, attend scheduled meetings with their Personal Tutor/Programme Director/Supervisor, and participate in other events depending on their programme of study. Students will be informed of these events by the School.

Exclusion from Study for Unsatisfactory Academic Performance

Candidates unable to submit the thesis by the end of the maximum period of study, or the extended maximum period of study (including concessions), will be notified by the College postgraduate committee of impending exclusion from study. Supervisors may recommend that a student already matriculated on the PhD, MPhil, MSc by Research or a professional doctorate is excluded from study. In this case the following procedure will be followed.

1. The supervisor recommending exclusion from study will inform in writing the Head of School, or their nominee (normally the Postgraduate Director).
2. The Head of School or nominee will notify the student that exclusion from study has been recommended.
3. If the Head of School or nominee disagrees with the supervisor's recommendation for exclusion from study, they will ensure that an appropriate framework is in place to allow the candidate to continue with their studies, including the provision of any conditions, targets or deadlines that the candidate must fulfil.
4. The College committee with responsibility for postgraduate research matters examines the recommendations of the Head of School or nominee before deciding whether to accept the recommendation.
5. If a student has not met the criteria for progression, they will be invited to interview by the College committee before the decision is taken. This does not form part of any subsequent appeal process nor does it affect the student's right to submit a case for appeal.
6. If the decision to exclude from study is approved by the College, the student has the right to submit a case for appeal if they feel they have grounds. See section 5 Academic Appeals."



Procedure for Withdrawal and Exclusion from Studies

Purpose of Procedure

The Procedure for Withdrawal and Exclusion from Studies applies to circumstances where a student voluntarily wishes to leave the University permanently, and also circumstances where a student is required to leave the University permanently.

Scope: Mandatory Procedure

The procedure applies to all students who are withdrawn or excluded from the University and to University staff managing this procedure.

Contact Officer	Stuart Fitzpatrick	Academic Policy Officer	Stuart.Fitzpatrick@ed.ac.uk
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Document control

Dates	Approved: 26.04.12	Starts: 26.04.12	Equality impact assessment: 13.11.14	Amendments: 29.10.12, 30.06.14 20.11.14 09.01.15 16.02.15 18.08.16	Next Review: 2017/2018
Approving authority	Curriculum and Student Progression Committee on behalf of Senatus				
Consultation undertaken	Curriculum and Student Progression Committee				
Section responsible for procedure maintenance & review	Academic Services				
Related policies, procedures, guidelines & regulations	Assessment regulations, principles and guidelines www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/policies-regulations/regulations/assessment				
UK Quality Code	n/a				
Procedures superseded by this procedure	Revises the University's Procedure for Withdrawal and Exclusion from Studies (April 2011)				
Alternative format	If you require this document in an alternative format please email Academic.Services@ed.ac.uk or telephone 0131 650 2138.				
Keywords	Withdrawal, exclusion, permanent withdrawal, voluntary withdrawal				

Appendix 2- Procedure for Withdrawal and Exclusion from Studies

1. This document is the University's Procedure for Withdrawal and Exclusion from Studies. It provides a comprehensive and clear statement of the responsibilities of both the University and students.
2. In particular, the procedure has been updated to:
 - (i) take into account the latest requirements of UK immigration legislation;
 - (ii) clearly state the obligations on both the University and its students within the process;
 - (iii) provide clear guidance on how students are withdrawn on health grounds;
 - (iv) provide clear guidance on the process to be followed when a student has failed to satisfy the criteria for progression.
3. The following terminology is used:
 - (i) withdrawal from studies - this is a voluntary decision by the student.
 - (ii) exclusion from studies - this is where a student is required to leave the University. This may be for academic or other reasons (see 9-29 below).
4. This procedure makes reference to the College and to the Head of College. It is for Colleges and their Heads to determine local arrangements for the delegation of his/her authority.
5. There are separate procedures for interruption of studies (which is a temporary suspension of studies and hence a different process from permanent withdrawal or exclusion).

Withdrawal from studies

6. Any student may withdraw permanently from the University at any point in the year. However, a student may not voluntarily withdraw after a Head of College (or delegated authorising officer) has decided to exclude the student.
7. Before applying to withdraw, the student is strongly advised to consult beforehand his/her Personal Tutor/ Programme Director/ Supervisor in order to consider the implications of withdrawal. These include matters such as: access to the University's facilities; financial issues (scholarships, fees, other University debts, external financial issues relating to the Student Loans Company/Student Awards Agency for Scotland etc.); Tier 4 visas; exit awards; readmission.
8. Students wishing to withdraw must signal their intention by completing a standard University form (Withdrawal Form – Student) available at www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/forms/student-forms

Exclusion from studies

Exclusion for unsatisfactory academic progress

9. The criteria for progression on a programme of study can depend on the nature of the programme and / or year of study. These will be contained in the University's assessment and degree regulations (see the Degree Regulations and Programmes of

Study at <http://www.drps.ed.ac.uk/> and there may be additional information within College or School guidance, or in course and programme handbooks. This policy should be read in conjunction with those documents.

10. The [Taught Assessment Regulation on 'Publication of Results'](#) sets out responsibilities for ensuring that, where a student has failed their programme of study at the final stage, the student is informed in a timely and personal manner. If appropriate, an offer of a private consultation may be made. - <http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/taughtassessmentregulations.pdf>
11. Colleges should publicise procedures for considering the cases of students who have not met the criteria for progression. The Head of College (or delegated authorising officer) will normally invite for interview any student who has not met the criteria for progression. The interview provides an opportunity for the student to make a case for continuation.
12. The interview may be carried out electronically (e.g. by video, web-camera, etc.). The outcome of that interview will be one of the following:
 - (i) The student is permitted to progress to the next year of study;
 - (ii) The student cannot progress to the next year of study on his / her current programme but is permitted to continue his/her studies under other options permitted in the University regulations;
 - (iii) The student may voluntarily withdraw permanently from studies. This option will not be available if the student has already been notified in writing of exclusion from studies;
 - (iv) The student may be excluded from the University. In such cases, the student's eligibility for a Certificate, Diploma, Ordinary Degree or other exit qualification will be explored.
13. Students should recognise that the full range of options does not apply in every case, as it may depend on the year and nature of the programme and the status of the student. Exclusion from studies will only be invoked after other available options have been considered and may only be authorised by the Head of College (or delegated authorising officer).
14. The Head of College (or delegated authorising officer) will inform the student in writing (via the student's university email account) of the decision as soon as possible after the interview. The communication should set out clearly the decision reached and any terms attached.
15. A copy of the communication will be sent to the Personal Tutor/Programme Director/Supervisor. The College / School must advise Student Systems of any changes to the student's programme, mode of study or exclusion via the online student programme change form in EUCLID.
16. For students on PhD, MPhil, Masters by Research or professional doctorates, see guidance on student progress contained within the [Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students](#).

Exclusion for non-attendance

17. Students are liable for exclusion if they do not attend the University at key points during the academic session. The decision and procedure for exclusion follows that outlined in the previous section 'Exclusion for unsatisfactory academic progress'.

18. Students are required to undergo assessments, attend scheduled meetings with their Personal Tutor/Programme Director/Supervisor, and participate in other events depending on their programme of study. Students will be informed of these events by the School.

Students holding Tier 4 visas:

19. Under the terms of its sponsorship of international students on Tier 4 visas, the University has additional statutory obligations to monitor and report attendance to the Home Office at key points during the session, including census points arranged by Student Administration.

20. Where the student is excluded or withdraws from the University for whatever reason, the Compliance Manager (Student Administration) will report the student and end the sponsorship of their visa.

21. The [Tier 4 Student Attendance and Engagement Policy](#) sets out the University's responsibilities as a sponsor of international students within the UK immigration system which includes the requirement to evidence Tier 4 student attendance and engagement. The policy ensures that the University has relevant guidance for staff and mitigates risk related to the University's sponsor licence by ensuring that we have robust student attendance and engagement procedures in place. - http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/tier_4_student_engagement_and_attendance_policy_august_2015_approved.pdf

Exclusion for non-matriculation

New students:

22. Matriculation consists of three components: (i) registration; (ii) confirmation of attendance; (iii) full admission (i.e. adhering to other related admissions requirements). www.studentsystems.ed.ac.uk/student/matriculation/index.htm

23. In order to matriculate, a new student must:

- (i) within two weeks of his/her start date, be "registered" or have "attendance confirmed";
- (ii) within five weeks of his/her start date, have completed both of these matriculation activities.

24. Any student failing to meet these requirements will be deemed not to have commenced his/her studies, and will be excluded from the University and have his/her record cancelled.

25. A new student will not be fully matriculated until he/she provides the appropriate documentation at the start of his/her studies, including immigration documentation where required.

Continuing students:

26. If a continuing student fails to have his/her attendance confirmed within five weeks of the anniversary of his/her start date he/she is deemed not to have commenced his/her studies and is excluded and his/her record cancelled.

27. Further details on matriculation are available from Student Systems:
www.studentsystems.ed.ac.uk/student/matriculation/index.htm

Exclusion for lapse of time

28. A student who is past the maximum end-date of his/her studies will be excluded by the University. Before such an exclusion is enforced, the University will seek to make contact with the student to inform them of the exclusion timetable.

29. Research postgraduate students must submit their thesis within 12 months of their prescribed period of study (excluding any periods of interruption of studies). Students who fail to submit a thesis by the deadline specified by the regulations will be excluded.

30. A research postgraduate who has been examined but not carried out the required corrections or re-submission within one month of the maximum timescale stipulated by the relevant exam committee will be excluded.

Exclusion for disciplinary offence

31. In extreme cases the University's Student Discipline Committee may impose permanent exclusion of a student from the University. The [Code of Student Conduct](#) sets out expectations for student behaviour and the procedures the University uses to resolve matters when students' behaviour is unacceptable.

Exclusion for debt

32. Exclusion can also result from non-payment of any debt to the University as detailed in the [Policy on Collection of Student Fees and Related Charges](#)

Appeals

33. All individuals who have been excluded, irrespective of the reason for exclusion, may lodge an appeal against the exclusion through the normal University appeal procedure. The individual should be given details of the grounds on which an appeal against a decision may be lodged and specifically be informed that the College is regarded as the judge of the academic grounds for exclusion. Appeals should be sent directly to Academic Services at the email address academic.appeals@ed.ac.uk

34. Details of the academic appeal procedure can be found at:

For undergraduate/ postgraduate taught students:
www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/students/undergraduate/academic-appeals

For postgraduate research students
www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/students/postgraduate-research/academic-appeals

For individuals who are excluded for disciplinary reasons, details of the discipline procedures, including the appeal procedures can be found at:
www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/staff/discipline

Readmission

35. After withdrawal or exclusion an individual is no longer a student of the University and loses student status and access to University facilities. After withdrawal or exclusion, a former student wishing to be considered for return to study at the University must go through the normal application procedures.
35. A former PhD student who has been excluded through lapse of time is entitled to ask the College to reinstate his/her registration at a later date to permit examination of a completed thesis. A decision as to whether or not a candidate should be reinstated will be taken by the College, and factors such as the passage of time and its implications for the topic of study will be taken into account. Approval of such a reinstatement is exceptional and attracts a fee.

16 February 2015

20 April 2018

Reviewing the Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students

Executive Summary

The paper provides a draft of the new guidance document to replace the existing Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students. Content is drawn from the Code of Practice but has been rewritten aiming to use plain English and provide a more user-friendly document. It reduces the length of the document from 40 to 24 pages by removing duplication of content and pointing to information contained elsewhere where appropriate. A final draft will be submitted to the Committee's June meeting. The design concept for the new publication is attached as appendix 1. (It should be noted that the text in the design concept is from the existing Code of Practice and is used for illustration purposes only.)

Some content from the current Code of Practice has been left out of the new document as it is set out in regulations, policy or Programme Handbooks. This includes:

- **Regulations content:** periods of study, appointment of supervisors and examiners, thesis length, lay summary, joint publications, publications in the thesis, previously assessed material, final submission.
- **Pre-arrival information:** finding a supervisor, choosing a research topic, induction, English language requirements
- **Programme handbook content:** facilities, health and safety, data protection, joint PhD/collaborative programmes
- **Policy content:** plagiarism and cheating (student conduct), exclusion for unsatisfactory academic progress (withdrawal & exclusion policy), duty of care, online access
- **Operational information:** College postgraduate academic management, decisions of College committees, Senate Committees
- Immigration and visa advice (no specific content section but referenced where necessary)
- Research integrity (linked under Useful Resources)
- Proof reading (linked under Useful Resources)
- Graduations (linked under Useful Resources)

How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?

The paper aligns with the committee's priority to review the Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students.

Action requested

REC is invited to consider whether the draft provides appropriate content, decide the new title for the publication and confirm the communications strategy below.

How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?

The proposed changes to streamline the content in the Code of Practice will mean

substantial differences to the document. This will require clear communication to key stakeholders such as supervisors, postgraduate research students, Graduate School Directors and professional support staff.

Existing communication channels include College postgraduate committees and postgraduate administrative forums, the Postgraduate Research Supervisors Network, the Students' Association Postgraduate Research and School Reps, Academic Services' annual policy update.

To facilitate communication from within existing resources the following communication strategy is proposed:

Channel	Communicator
College postgraduate committees	College REC representatives
College postgraduate administrative forums	College REC representatives/Academic Services via College postgraduate admin contacts
Postgraduate Research Supervisors Network	REC Vice-Convener, IAD, Academic Services
Annual policy update	Academic Services

Resource / Risk / Compliance

1. Resource implications (including staffing)

Resources for updating the document are expected to be met from existing Academic Services resources.

2. Risk assessment

A risk assessment is not included as the revised document does not contain any new policy information or changes to current practice.

3. Equality and Diversity

The document aims to meet the needs of different equality groups and remove or minimise disadvantage. An equality impact assessment will be carried out by Academic Services.

4. Freedom of information

The paper is **open**.

Key words

Postgraduate research supervision

Originator of the paper

Susan Hunter, Academic Services

06 April 2018

Guide for Research Supervisors and Students

Commented [HS1]: Need to confirm title

Introduction

1 Roles and Responsibilities

1.1 Students' responsibilities

1.2 Supervisor responsibilities

1.3 The College Committee

2 Student-Supervisor Relationship

2.1 Contact & key meetings

2.2 What happens if the supervisory relationship breaks down

3 Annual progression reviews

3.1 Annual progression review process

3.2 Problems with progress

4 Thesis preparation and assessment

4.1 Thesis preparation

4.2 Thesis submission

4.3 Assessment

4.4 Thesis resubmission

5 Absences and Concessions

5.1 Research away from Edinburgh – Leave of Absence

5.2 Unable to study – Interruptions of study

5.3 Extensions of study

5.4 Special Circumstances affecting a student's studies and assessment

5.5 Withdrawal from studies

5.6 Exclusion from studies

6 Finding other support and information

6.1 Resolving problems

6.2 Programme handbooks

6.3 Student Support Services

6.4 Wellbeing resources

6.5 Training and support for students

6.6 Training and support for supervisors

6.7 Students working during study

6.8 Fees and funding

6.9 Degree and assessment regulations

6.10 Student appeals

6.11 Vacation leave

6.12 Student maternity and parental leave

6.13 Complaints

6.14 Student conduct

6.15 Links to useful resources

Introduction

The doctoral student-supervisor relationship is of paramount importance in all research degrees. The University has a diverse research community with a variety of practices, so this guide points to where more information can be found on University policies, regulations and practices for postgraduate research supervision. The guide is not part of the University's regulatory framework, but offers supplementary guidance and practical advice for both supervisors and doctoral students, as well as describing roles and responsibilities of students and staff. The roles and responsibilities outlined in this guide refer to doctoral degree students and supervisors. Different arrangements may be in place for distance students or students on MSc by Research degrees and these will be detailed in the relevant programme handbook.

This guide should be read in conjunction with the University's Postgraduate Degree Regulations, Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees and programme handbook.

The guide is consistent with the UK Quality Code.

1 Roles and responsibilities

At the University of Edinburgh, each doctoral student is supervised by a team of at least two supervisors. The nature of the research project will determine the makeup of the supervisory team and the key responsibilities of each member of the supervision team, including the student, must be agreed by the team from the outset.

The split in responsibilities between the principal or lead supervisor, the co-supervisor and the assistant supervisor is decided in the best interests of the student and the research project. However, all supervisors are expected to take an active role in supervision and all have a responsibility towards the student. All supervisors are expected to attend supervisor briefings at least every five years. Both new and continuing supervisors are expected to seek out continuous professional development activities and to have current knowledge of support available to students at the University.

1.1 Students' responsibilities

All students are expected to comply with the University's policies and regulations which along with the terms of admission form the contract between the student and University during their studies. Students are also responsible for meeting any expectations set out in their programme handbook and for adhering to the Code of Student Conduct.

[University Student Contract](#)
[Code of Student Conduct](#)

Postgraduate research students have particular responsibilities for:

The research project

- Acquainting themselves with the standards expected of the relevant degree in their subject (PhD, MPhil, MSc by Research or taught professional doctorate).
- Taking advantage of the facilities, training and supervision offered in the University.
- Working as a professional, independent researcher accountable for the development of their own research.
- Maintaining ethical standards in the design, conduct and reporting of research.
- Working diligently and effectively throughout their studies.

- Following the rules of an Associated Institution if they are working there. (See the University's [Associated Institution policy](#) for more information.)

The thesis

- Producing, on time, a thesis that meets the criteria set out in the Postgraduate Degree Regulations and Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees.

Supervision

- Making themselves available at times agreed and maintaining regular contact with their supervisors.
- Producing a record of key supervision meetings and forwarding it to their supervisor for agreement.
- Discussing any proposed employment with their supervisor.

Resolving problems

- Actively seeking advice and help from the sources identified in this guide if problems arise.
- Notifying their Principal Supervisor of any special circumstances affecting their studies or assessment.

Student responsibility for the quality of the thesis

The thesis is the student's own work and therefore they are responsible for its quality. That means that students are responsible for the quality of their thesis when it is submitted for assessment. The supervisor may advise on whether they think work is ready for submission, but their opinion has no influence on the final outcome of assessment by the thesis examiners.

1.2 Supervisor responsibilities

1.2.1 Principal/Lead Supervisor

Role

The Principal Supervisor, sometimes referred to as Lead Supervisor in a Co-Supervisory team (see 1.3 below), has the main responsibility for supervision. Throughout the rest of this document the term "Principal Supervisor" will be used for both Principal and Lead Supervisor.

This includes taking overall responsibility for:

- the administrative aspects of supervision, for example, submitting concession requests and obtaining approval for any co-supervision arrangements from the Postgraduate Directors of Schools involved;
- the student's annual progression review;
- the health and safety and welfare of the student;
- respecting the student's intellectual property;
- leading on initial and ongoing discussions with the supervisory team to negotiate and agree on roles and responsibilities for each team member;
- communication within the supervisory team.

1.2.2 Co-Supervisor

Role

A co-supervision model may be chosen when it is clear that the student's work involves interdisciplinary research. When a this model is chosen, the Co-Supervisor will play a major role in supervising the research project. The division of responsibilities between the Principal or Lead supervisor and the co-supervisor must be agreed upon at the outset.

1.2.3 Assistant Supervisor

Role

The Assistant Supervisor's role involves fewer responsibilities than the Principal Supervisor, but in some cases may have closer day-to-day involvement in the student's research. Assistant Supervisors may also provide complementary expertise, such as specialised knowledge of a particular technique, or depending on the work context, day-to-day supervision in some cases. This role can also provide staff development opportunities for early career researchers.

1.2.4 Supervisors in Associated Institutions

Supervisors working in Associated Institutions have the same responsibilities as University of Edinburgh supervisors. Staff employed by Associated Institutions may serve as a Principal Supervisor if:

- The student is working full time in the Associated Institution,
- The Co-Supervisor or Assistant Supervisor(s) are University employees,
- The Principal Supervisor from the Associated Institution is prepared to take on supervisory responsibilities as if they were working within the University and undertake the roles and responsibilities outlined in this Handbook, and
- The arrangement is approved by the College Committee.

Supervisors from Associated Institutions are encouraged to attend the University's supervisor briefing sessions.

If the Principal Supervisor is from an Associated Institution, then the University Supervisor and School Postgraduate Director are responsible for:

- Ensuring that the Associated Institution Principal Supervisor has read the University's regulations and policies.
- Monitoring student progress (joint responsibility with the Postgraduate Director and College Committee)

1.2.5 Responsibilities of the supervisory team

At the first meeting, the supervisory team should discuss the following responsibilities and decide how to ensure that all of these are covered. This should be discussed again at the student's annual progression review and at other times as necessary.

- Introducing the student to the subject area, its facilities and procedures, and to other research students and relevant staff in the School.

- Advising the student on drawing up a research plan and timetable for completion.
- Advising the student on research ethics and integrity, including obtaining ethical approval.
- Advising the student on facilities required for the research and supporting the student in accessing these.
- Advising the student on the key milestones of the degree, and guiding them in how to prepare for annual progression review and the viva voce examination.
- Agreeing the minimum number of supervision meetings and how these will be recorded.
- Organising regular meetings to discuss all matters relating to the student's research, including feedback on written work.
- Advising on the student's professional development needs at the start of the programme and reviewing these throughout the student's studies.
- Encouraging students to develop transferable skills and to attend appropriate training courses.
- Advising the student on where to find appropriate sources of additional support and signposting University student support services details included in section 6.3.
- Encouraging the research student to become an active member of the research community, for example by advising attendance at relevant conferences and supporting him/her in seeking funding for such events.

1.3 The College Committee

Each College has a specific committee with responsibility for postgraduate research matters. The committee's name may vary by College, but it will have overall responsibility for postgraduate research supervision, annual progression review decisions, authorising periods of leave or changes to study periods. The College Committee also acts at the Board of Examiners for postgraduate research degree awards. Throughout this document the term "College Committee" is used to refer to all these roles.

2 Student-Supervisor Relationship

The student-supervisor relationship is vital to all research degrees. Therefore close contact between supervisors and students is essential.

Respect, trust, confidence and fairness are essential elements of the student-supervisor relationship. Because this relationship is fundamental to the research, there may sometimes be interpersonal problems. Most interpersonal problems can be avoided if students, supervisors, and other members of the University community contribute responsibly and professionally to their working relationship by being respectful, courteous, punctual and conscientious.

The University's Dignity and Respect policy promotes a positive working and studying culture which every student and member of staff contributes to and in which they can fulfil their potential. The policy also outlines dignity and respect responsibilities for all University staff and students.

[Dignity and Respect Policy](#)

2.1 Contact & key meetings

- Supervisors are responsible for meeting regularly, and maintaining regular contact, with students.
- Students are responsible for making themselves available for key supervision meetings and producing a record of those meetings for agreement with their supervisor.

Students rely on contact with their supervisors for guidance and intellectual input to their research. Supervision meetings provide time for discussing all matters relating to the student's research, including feedback on written work. Meetings may be face to face, or virtual. As well as supervision meetings, there will also be informal meetings to discuss planning and progress as well as formal annual progression reviews (see section 3). However, the key meetings referred to in this section are the formal supervision meetings.

The amount of contact between student and supervisors will vary depending on the length of the programme, how the research is being done and how much support the student needs. For example, there may be more meetings in the first few months when the research project is being defined. Part-time students should be prepared for frequent meetings at the start of their research to help with planning.

Agreeing the purpose and frequency of supervisory meetings

It is important that both student and supervisory team agree, at the start of the programme, how often meetings will be held, the purpose of meetings and the kinds of discussion, including academic and personal progress. It is important that students can easily contact their supervisors for advice, so supervisors may also be available for additional non-scheduled meetings. Students can initiate meetings but supervisors need to ensure that the minimum agreed contact requirements are met.

Keeping records of supervisory meetings

Recording supervisory meetings helps the student and supervisory team keep track of actions and decisions. Therefore, students should provide their Principal Supervisor with a written note including:

- the date and purpose of the meeting,
- any problems identified, and
- action points.

2.2 What happens if the supervisory relationship breaks down

If the supervisory relationship seems to have broken down, or needs to be changed (for example if the supervisor changes institution), students or supervisors can contact their Postgraduate Adviser or School Postgraduate Director. If the problem isn't able to be resolved, then the College Committee should be approached through its Secretary or Chair. If there are problems with the supervisory relationship then University staff will respect confidentiality and limit disclosures to as few colleagues as necessary to resolve the problem.

If there appears to be a breakdown in the student-supervisor relationship and problems are not able to be resolved locally, both the supervisor and the student must consider mediation. Mediation is a voluntary process, however the University will always try to resolve conflict in a positive way. That means that the parties who are in conflict must give informed consideration to mediation as a

way of resolving the conflict. Schools can request mediation from the College which can contact the University's accredited mediator in Human Resources for advice.

[Support for students and supervisors?]

Commented [HS2]: Is there anything to say here about additional support in this situation – eg Advice Place for students, what about for supervisors?

3 Annual progression review

- Principal Supervisors are responsible for ensuring doctoral student progress is reviewed for each year of full or part-time study and helping students prepare for their annual progression review if needed.
- The supervisory team is responsible for participating in the annual progression review.
- Students are responsible for fulfilling the requirements of their research degree programme including requirements for annual progression reviews.

Keeping on track with research can be challenging for students. Therefore, annual progression review meetings are essential in monitoring student progress and supporting students in maximising their chance of successfully completing on time. Milestones for each year of study are agreed between the Principal Supervisor and student to help in reviewing progress. For students to benefit fully from annual progression reviews it's important that supervisors provide constructive criticism about the student's work.

Annual progression reviews also give a formal record of how the research project and thesis are going, recognition of student achievements and identify any training needs.

3.1 Annual progression review process

Timescale

The first review takes place within nine to 12 months of matriculation. By then students will have independently produced an identifiable body of work that can be assessed. This review will normally form the basis for confirmation of degree registration and that any original registration conditions have been met.

Progress is then assessed annually until thesis submission (or more frequently if recommended by the Postgraduate Director for an individual student - see below). The timescales are the same for full and part-time students.

Process

- The process begins when the student is notified by email that their report is ready to complete. Once the student has completed their part, the supervisors complete their sections.
- The student prepares a presentation or report, including a forward plan of their work, before the meeting, with help from the supervisor if needed.
- The student attends a review meeting where they may need to give an oral presentation.
- At the review meeting, an assessment panel, which includes the supervisory team and at least one other person (reviewer), reviews the student's presentation or report.
- After each review meeting, students get feedback from the assessment panel. The student, supervisors, reviewer and School Postgraduate Director then sign-off the online report before a progression recommendation is submitted to the College for its approval (the student is not involved in the progression decision).

- If there are concerns about a student's progress following any review, then a further (repeat) review will take place within three months. (Only one repeat review can be undertaken before a student can progress to the next year of PhD study, or is re-registered for a different postgraduate degree.)

What is reviewed

Programme handbooks will give information on annual progression review arrangements but some of the things that reviews may include are:

- A timetable for progress agreed by the student and supervisory team.
- A record of whether deadlines have been met.
- The results of taught elements of the programme examined by written tests or continuous assessment.
- Student report on any programme of skills training they have undertaken to support their research.
- Student report on transferable skills development.

Reviewing supervision arrangements

Sometimes a student's research changes direction and may move away from the supervisors' expertise. The annual progression review lets supervisors consider their own competence to deal with any new research area. If different expertise is needed to support the student, the School can recommend a change in supervisors to the College committee.

Guidance and regulations

Guidance for students on completing their annual progression review is available on Student Systems' website.

[Postgraduate research annual progression review form](#)

Guidance for supervisors on the annual progression review system and their role is available on Student Systems' website:

[Principal and lead supervisor role summary and annual progression review guidance](#)

[Additional supervisor role summary and annual progression review guidance](#)

The regulations on annual progression review, including the recommendations that can be made following a review, are in the Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees.

[Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees](#)

3.2 Problems with progress

Postgraduate research study is challenging and sometimes students may experience problems making progress. To help support students, it is important for supervisors to be open about any difficulties they foresee with successful completion. There are various options available to support students experiencing problems with progress and University student support services may be able to help with non-academic problems.

If, following annual progression review, a student is not making satisfactory progress, then the supervisors and the Postgraduate Director may recommend deferment of a decision (part-time

students' first year review only), re-registration for a different postgraduate research or taught degree, or exclusion from study – this option is rare. (The full list of progression review recommendations is in the Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees – see below). Supervisors will provide students with a written explanation of their assessment in these cases.

A supervisor who thinks that progress has been consistently unsatisfactory should discuss the problem with the student and follow this up with a written record of the discussion for the student. Unsatisfactory progress will also be noted in annual reports, and flagged for remedial action.

The annual progression review may occasionally record serious problems, requests for extensions to the period of study or recommend exclusion from study. In these cases, the College Committee will check annual reports for indications of how difficulties arose and what steps were taken by supervisor and student to deal with them at an early stage. The College may also invite the student to be interviewed. The chair of the College Committee, or Postgraduate Dean, may carry out this assessment with advice from the College Office. Students will not be excluded until they are given an opportunity to respond to the assessment – see the University Procedure for Withdrawal and Exclusion from Study.

[Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research](#)

[University Procedure for withdrawal and exclusion from study](#)

4 Thesis preparation and assessment

4.1 Thesis preparation

Writing up and submitting the thesis on time should be the priority in a student's final year. In preparation for thesis submission, student and supervisor should agree the final form of the thesis and a schedule for completing it. The grounds for award of doctoral and MPhil degrees are set out in the Postgraduate Degree Regulations. Schools and Colleges may also have additional guidance on expectations for thesis presentation, which supervisors will be able to advise on. Guidance about the format of the thesis, binding requirements and electronic formats is available from the School or College Office.

More information on typical milestones and support in preparing the thesis is available on the Institute for Academic Development website:

[Writing up your PhD](#)

The thesis

The criteria for the award of research degrees is set out in the Postgraduate Degree Regulations. The thesis needs to:

- Be the student's own work, except where indicated throughout the thesis and summarised clearly on the declarations page of the thesis.
- Make an original and significant contribution to knowledge in the field of study.
- Contain material suitable for wider dissemination.
- Show adequate knowledge of the field of study and of the relevant literature.
- Demonstrate critical judgement of the candidate's own work and that of other scholars in the field.

- Present a coherent body of work.

The thesis should be written to:

- Be satisfactory in its literary presentation.
- Provide a coherent structure with full and adequate references.
- Make clear the intentions of the work, its background, methods and conclusions.
- Be understandable to a scholar in the same field.
- Be presented in a clear, consistent and accessible format.

Portfolio material

Some submissions will be in alternative formats to the traditional thesis. The Postgraduate Degree Regulations and programme handbook specify any further requirements for designs, composition, artworks or performances and their display, presentation and document.

Additional information

More information on thesis binding, the signed declaration, including publications in a thesis and producing a lay summary is available on the University website.

[Doctoral thesis submission](#)

The University's [Postgraduate Degree Regulations](#)

4.2 Thesis submission

Once the thesis is ready for submission, the student usually presents it at the School or College Office. Supervisors will be able to advise students where to submit their thesis. Thesis submission forms are also available online:

[Doctoral thesis submission](#)

4.3 Assessment

Assessment regulations, including examiner roles and responsibilities, conduct of assessment, thesis regulations and assessment decisions are set out in the Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees.

The University's [Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees](#)

All research degrees (apart from MSc by Research) are assessed in two stages; thesis assessment by the examiners followed by an oral exam or viva voca, often referred to as the "viva".

Thesis assessment

Examiners are asked to assess the thesis on the grounds set out in the regulations and as part of their report to consider:

- Is the thesis an original work that makes a significant contribution to knowledge in or understanding of the field of study?
- Does the thesis contain material worthy of publication?

- Does the thesis demonstrate adequate knowledge of the field of study and relevant literature?
- Does the thesis show the exercise of critical judgement with regard to both the student's work and that of other scholars in the same general field?
- Is the presentation and style of the thesis satisfactory?

The viva

The oral exam, often referred to as the viva, is normally held within three months of thesis submission depending on:

- When the Notice of Intention to Submit (NITS form) is submitted by the student.
- When the thesis is submitted by the student.
- How long it takes to select and appoint examiners.
- How long the examiners require to examine the thesis.
- When everyone involved is available to meet for the oral examination, including any visa restrictions on the student's availability.

The viva is usually held in Edinburgh, but in exceptional circumstances the College Committee may approve a remote exam by video link. Guidance on remote PhD oral exams is available online:

University guidance on [PhD by Research oral examinations by video link](#)

4.4 Thesis resubmission

Following assessment, the examiners may ask students to carry out further work on the thesis and to resubmit it for the same or a different degree. Supervisors will guide students through the necessary steps to meet the examiners' requirements and continue to provide supervision as needed.

Students will get a clear written statement from the examiners, approved by the College Committee, of what revisions are required. Once approved, this statement cannot be altered without College Committee agreement.

The resubmitted thesis is only assessed against the written statement on re-examination, and the examiners won't introduce any new criticisms of previously examined material.

The same process is followed for resubmitting a thesis as for the original submission – for example, presentation at the School or College Office.

5 Absences and concessions

Sometimes students need to have time away from the University or from their studies. This might be to conduct research elsewhere on a leave of absence. There also may be times when students need to interrupt their studies, for example for health reasons. This section gives advice on ways the University can support students through a variety of situations that may impact on their study.

5.1 Research away from Edinburgh – Leave of Absence

Students sometimes conduct part of their research away from Edinburgh. This is referred to as a leave of absence. Students who want a leave of absence of 30 calendar days or more should talk to their supervisor, who will be able to advise on obtaining permission.

A leave of absence should:

- Benefit the research programme.
- Not be detrimental to the research and the student's development and participation in the University's academic community.
- Not conflict with any other requirement of the student's programme of study.
- Not conflict with any obligations for the student to be available for on-campus activity.
- Have a working timetable agreed by supervisors and student.
- Be accompanied by an agreed method for submitting written work and receiving feedback, and for supervisory meetings, established by the supervisors and student.

Further information on how leave of absence is approved and student support arrangements during leave is available from the College Office. Leave of absence doesn't apply to students on recognised distance learning programmes.

Leave of Absence for International Students

Tier 4 students are normally expected to carry out all of their study on campus. However, in some cases they may need to study at another location; for example, a work placement or period of study abroad at another institution as part of their programme. In these cases, students should apply to their School for a leave of absence. The University will continue to sponsor student visas during the leave of absence, providing it can maintain Tier 4 sponsor duties, and student Tier 4 visas will remain valid. Advice is available from visahelp@ed.ac.uk.

Commented [HS3]: Content from Edinburgh Global

5.2 Unable to study – Interruptions of study

- Students are responsible for notifying their supervisor of the need for an interruption and for submitting an interruption request.

Commented [HS4]: This section has been updated for consistency with new policy on Authorised Interruptions of Study (see paper REC 17/18 4A)

Authorised interruption of study, usually referred to as "interruption", is available for students who are unable to study for a while. This may be because of health or family problems for example, and students should notify their supervisor as soon as the need for an interruption arises. Interruptions will be authorised when there is good reason and examples of what is considered good reason are given in the University policy on authorised interruptions of study.

University policy on Authorised Interruption of Study

Commented [HS5]: Link to be added

To request an interruption, students should:

- Make a formal request to their supervisor using the appropriate form.
- Provide any supporting evidence required by their School or College.

Important things to consider when requesting an interruption:

- It may have an impact on a student's visa - advice is available from Edinburgh Global.
- It may have an impact on student funding.
- It may have an impact on council tax (for example discounts and exemptions).
- An interruption of study cannot be granted after the maximum period of study has elapsed.

An approved interruption of study postpones the end of the total period of study and the rules on interruptions are set out in the Postgraduate Degree Regulations.

For further information and advice:

For Tier 4 students – [Edinburgh Global](#)

[The Advice Place](#) – free, impartial advice for students

[University Scholarships and Student Funding](#) – for advice on funding and finance

University [Postgraduate Degree Regulations](#)

5.3 **Extensions** of study

- Principal Supervisors are responsible for submitting extension requests.

All research programmes have a maximum completion date for thesis submission. An extension of study can allow additional time beyond the maximum date for submission. Extensions of study are available in exceptional circumstances. For example, if unforeseen difficulties have held up the research or completion of the thesis. A strong case is required and must be supported by the Principal Supervisor.

To request an extension:

- The Principal Supervisor submits the request.
- The request includes a statement outlining the academic reasons for the delay, and
- A plan of work towards submitting the thesis, with milestones and specific dates agreed with the Principal Supervisor.
- Extension requests must be made before the end of the student's maximum submission date (for example, within four years for a full-time PhD).

Important things to consider when requesting an extension:

- It may have an impact on a student's visa - advice is available from Edinburgh Global.
- It may have an impact on student funding.
- It may have an impact on council tax (for example discounts and exemptions).
- There are restrictions to the amount of time that can be requested for extension – these are set out in the Postgraduate Degree Regulations.
- Additional fees may be incurred if an extension of study request is approved – see the University's [tuition fees policy](#).

For further information and advice:

For Tier 4 students – [Edinburgh Global](#)

[The Advice Place](#) – free, impartial advice for students

University [Postgraduate Degree Regulations](#)

5.4 **Special Circumstances affecting a student's studies and assessment**

- Students are responsible for notifying their Principal Supervisor, Postgraduate Director or Postgraduate Adviser in writing of any special circumstances before the College Committee or oral examination.

Commented [HS6]: Add this content from PGR Interruptions & Extensions guidance being replaced by new Authorised Interruptions policy?
It should be noted however that the Senatus Researcher Experience Committee places considerable emphasis on prompt completion of the thesis within the prescribed period of study, plus any permitted submission period, set by the University. Thesis resubmission periods may require a student to be given an extension. Further extensions to agreed thesis resubmission periods are not permitted.

Special circumstances are exceptional circumstances beyond a student's control that significantly impact on their research performance, attendance or assessment submissions.

Students should discuss any circumstances affecting their ability to engage with their studies with their Principal Supervisor first.

Support for students with special circumstances that are disrupting their studies can be offered through authorised interruption or extension of study. However, there may be times when personal circumstances affect assessment, for example annual progression review or oral exam (viva). If these are affected, it may be possible to reschedule or change the format of the meeting or exam.

The College Committee may also take into account any special circumstances when considering recommendations from an annual progression review or oral exam. Therefore, it's important that students notify their Principal Supervisor, Postgraduate Director or Postgraduate Adviser in writing of any special circumstance before the College Committee or examiners' meeting.

Examples of circumstances that might have a significant impact include:

- Significant short-term physical illness or injury.
- Significant short-term mental ill-health.
- A long-term or chronic physical health condition, which has recently worsened temporarily or permanently.
- A long-term or chronic mental health condition, which has recently worsened temporarily or permanently.
- Bereavement or serious illness of a person with whom the student has a close relationship.
- A long-term relationship breakdown, such as a marriage.
- Victim of a crime which is likely to have significant emotional impact.
- Military conflict, natural disaster, or extreme weather conditions.

Examples of circumstances that are unlikely to be accepted include:

- A long-term or chronic health condition (including mental ill-health) which has not worsened recently, or for which the University has already made a reasonable adjustment.
- A minor short-term illness or injury (for example, a common cold), which would not reasonably have had a significant adverse impact on assessment.
- Occasional low mood, stress or anxiety.
- Circumstances which were foreseeable or preventable.
- Holidays.
- Financial issues.
- Pressure of academic work (unless this contributes to ill-health).
- Poor time-management.
- Lack of awareness of dates or times of assessment submission or examination.
- Failure, loss or theft of data, a computer or other equipment.
- Commitments to paid or voluntary employment.
- Death of a pet.

For taught courses taken by postgraduate research students, the University's Special Circumstances Policy applies.

[University's Special Circumstances Policy](#)

5.5 Withdrawal from studies

Withdrawal from studies is a voluntary decision by the student. Any student may withdraw permanently from the University at any point in the year. However, before applying to withdraw, students are strongly advised to consult their Principal Supervisor and to consider the implications of withdrawal. More information is available in:

The University's [Procedure for Withdrawal and Exclusion from Studies](#)

5.6 Exclusion from studies

It is very rare for students to be excluded from study. However, there are some circumstances in which the School may recommend exclusion from study. These might include unsatisfactory academic progress following an annual progression review, or lapse of time if a student hasn't submitted a thesis by the end of their maximum period of study. More information is available in:

The University's [Procedure for Withdrawal and Exclusion from Studies](#)

Commented [HS7]: See also paper REC 17/18 4C which proposes additional content relevant to PGR students for inclusion in the Procedure for Withdrawal and Exclusion from Studies

6 Finding other support and information

6.1 Resolving problems

Supervisors are the first point of contact for students if any problems arise and will either be able to offer advice themselves or direct the student to other sources of advice.

There may be times when students feel unable to confide in their supervisors. If so, they can get in touch with the Postgraduate Adviser in their subject area, or the School's Postgraduate Director. Contact details of key School staff are available in the programme handbook. If the problem cannot be resolved by them, the student may then consult with the Secretary or Chair of the College Committee.

Supervisors can also seek help in resolving problems by the same routes.

6.2 Programme handbooks

The School Office will provide students with their programme handbook.

Programme handbooks are an important source of information for students. They are part of the University's academic governance framework and include programme-specific information on:

- supervision arrangements,
- thesis (or equivalent) requirements,
- research skills training,
- professional development,
- teaching opportunities and
- research culture.

Handbooks also include information on programme organisation, assessment and feedback, key contacts and locations, student support services, feedback information, attendance requirements, student representation structure, data protection and health and safety information.

6.3 Student Support Services

The University, Colleges, Schools and Students' Association provide a comprehensive range of support services to enable students to make the most of their time as part of the University community. Many student support units offer online as well as face to face services, although the range accessible to distance students may be more limited than for on-campus students.

6.3.1 School Postgraduate Advisers

Schools may appoint an individual or group to support the Postgraduate Director in providing impartial advice to students and supervisors. The School Postgraduate Adviser, or advisory group, can advise on supervision issues, space and facilities, and complaints. Further details will be provided in the programme handbook.

Commented [HS8]: This is not universal.

6.3.2 Students' Association

Research students are automatically members of Edinburgh University Students' Association. The Students' Association provides a range of services, including advice and representation, peer learning and support, events and entertainment. Over 300 student-run societies are supported by the Students' Association. For more details, see the association's postgraduate guide, at eusa.ed.ac.uk/postgrad or visit one of the Students' Association buildings at Teviot Row House, Potterrow, Pleasance, or King's Buildings House.

The Advice Place

The Advice Place is home to the Students' Association's professional advice team. They offer free, impartial and confidential information for students on everything and anything including funding, accommodation, student welfare, and academic matters. For full details on the range of advice on offer, visit:

[The Advice Place](#)

Student Representation

At the beginning of each academic year, Schools elect Postgraduate Student Representatives ('Reps') who are trained and supported by the Students' Association and work closely with their Postgraduate Director. Postgraduate research students elect a University-wide Postgraduate Research Rep and there are five Sabbatical Officers elected by all students to represent them across the University. Research students are encouraged to engage with student representation processes and elections so that Postgraduate Research Reps can work with them to improve their University experience and the Students' Association can adequately represent postgraduate research students.

6.3.3 English Language Tuition

English Language Education (ELE) provides classes, workshops, and materials for international students who would benefit from English language support whilst studying for their degree. Supervisors can refer a student who needs help with English to ELE directly, even if the student has

not taken the Test of English at Matriculation (TEAM). The student will then be offered English language tuition, or independent study materials and advice.

[English Language Education](#)

6.3.4 Library Collections and Services

A wide range of library services, collections and study spaces are provided to support both taught and research elements of students' work. Collections include print and digital books and journals, rare books and special collections, artworks, images, museum items and archives. Digital and print library resources are available for students based in Edinburgh. In addition to electronic resources, printed library materials are digitised where possible for students undertaking online or distance learning.

[Library services](#)

Academic Support Librarians

There is an Academic Support Librarian allocated to each School. Their role is to:

- provide advice and assistance on using library services and collections,
- demonstrate the use of information resources by arranging subject-specific information skills sessions,
- help students' with research by arranging one-to-one advice sessions, and
- advise on research data management.

[Academic Support Librarians](#)

6.3.5 Computing Resources

Email

- Students are responsible for managing their University of Edinburgh email account.

The University assumes that students are computer literate and competent in using the web and email.

All students are provided with a University email account and this is used as the official means of communication for a variety of essential information. See:

[University policy on the use of email for contacting students](#)

Computing facilities

Schools will ensure that students have access to specialised computing facilities where required, and receive appropriate training. Training will cover how to access and use computing facilities relevant to particular degree programmes and research projects.

Information Services (IS) provides a wide range of advice on all aspects of computing and IT.

[IS information for students](#)

[IS information for researchers and teaching staff](#)

6.3.6 Student Disability Service

The Student Disability Service provides information and advice to staff (including supervisors and support staff) and disabled students. As well as a range of support services, Student Disability Service staff:

- Determine a range of reasonable adjustments based on an assessment of the student's needs which Schools must implement in line with the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.
- Advise supervisors and support staff on how best to support disabled students.
- Advise on specific support adjustments to study, examination and assessment procedures.
- Provide a range of student support assistants who can carry out tasks such as proofreading texts, assist in the library and act as notetakers.
- Support students to apply for statutory or University funding, if they are entitled to Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) or equivalent funding for international and EU students.
- Provide training on request from academic and other University staff.

Students with impairments (this includes dyslexia, long term mental health problems, students on the autistic spectrum, as well as physical and sensory impairments) that will impact on study should contact the Student Disability Service as soon as possible.

[Student Disability Service](#)

Regulations on "Reasonable Adjustments" to assessments for disabled students are included in the University's assessment regulations.

[Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees](#)

6.4 Wellbeing resources

Postgraduate research study can be stressful at times. To support students and staff to manage their wellbeing, the University provides a variety of services.

6.4.1 Student Counselling Service

The Student Counselling Service offers one-to-one counselling, workshops and consultation, and training for staff. The service aims to help students work through their difficulty, understand themselves better and find ways of managing their situation.

[Student Counselling Service](#)

6.4.2 Health and wellbeing

Details of a range of services provided for students by the University and throughout Edinburgh for physical and mental wellbeing are available on the University's Student website.

[Health and wellbeing](#)

Information for staff on the wide range of health promoting activities across the University is available on the Staff website.

[Staff health and wellbeing](#)

Commented [HS9]: Content requested by Excellence in Doctoral Education and Career Development Programme (see Paper REC 17/18 2C)

6.5 Training and support for students

- Students are responsible for their own development as researchers

The University, Schools and Support Services provide information, support and training for research and transferable skills. These skills are vital for development as an independent researcher and important for life and career after the degree.

Skills are often developed as an integral part of supervision and engagement with the research community. However, students can also benefit from credit-bearing research methods courses as well as a variety of training courses and online resources.

Transferable skills and professional development training is provided by Colleges, Schools, the Institute for Academic Development (IAD), the Careers Service, the Students' Association, Information Services, doctoral training centres and partnerships and other groups. Students also have access to online and University Library skills development resources.

Students are encouraged to take the initiative in their own development and record their portfolio of skills, including:

- Attendance on regular training and development opportunities in accordance with their personal development needs and the demands of their research.
- Use of e-learning opportunities.
- Use of the library and online resources.
- Engagement with the research community including presenting at seminars, tutoring and demonstrating, producing publications and attending conferences.

6.6 Training and support for supervisors

- Supervisors are responsible for maintaining the necessary supervisory expertise to perform their role satisfactorily
- Supervisors are responsible for encouraging students to develop transferable skills and to attend appropriate training courses

The University provides training and events to support supervisors in maintaining expertise in performing their supervisory role.

Supervisor briefing sessions are organised regularly at Colleges and Schools. There are compulsory briefings for new supervisors including information on University regulations and procedures and support for their role. Supervisors are expected to renew their training every five years.

There are also regular Postgraduate Research Supervisor Network events which focus on specific elements of supervision. Informal, drop-in supervisor coffee discussion sessions are hosted regularly by the Institute for Academic Development to which all supervisors are welcome. Network events and informal discussions are advertised in the Supervisor newsletter and Institute for Academic Development website.

Contact the Institute for Academic Development for more information on briefings, events and supervisor support. Email: iad.phdsupervisors@ed.ac.uk

6.7 Students working during study

Work benefits both student and employer, but good self-management is needed to make sure students meet their research commitments. It's also important for students to maintain a good work-life balance.

The University will employ full-time postgraduate research students for no more than an average of 9 hours per week across the academic year (this is University policy), and recommends that students also apply this limit to work with other employers. Students should discuss any proposed employment with their Principal Supervisor.

If students get funding for their PhD, they must also check whether there are any restrictions or conditions on the amount of work they are allowed to do. Most funders allow some part-time work, particularly in areas relevant to the students' research, and encourage a common sense approach to other paid work.

For students on Tier 4 visas, there are additional limits on employment set by the UK Home Office. More information is available on the University website:

[Part-time work during studies](#)

More information on working during study is available on the Careers Service website:

[Part-time and vacation work](#)

The University's Policy for tutors and demonstrators, along with guidance for students regarding working during their studies, is also available online:

[Tutors and demonstrators](#)

6.8 Fees and funding

6.8.1 Paying fees and fee status

Student fees and tuition costs are paid to the University Finance Department and more information on paying fees is available on their website. Tuition fee status and discount information is available on the Scholarships and Student Funding website.

[Student Academic Fees – Finance Department](#)

[Tuition fees – Scholarships and Student Funding](#)

6.8.2 Scholarships and funding

Information about scholarships and financial support for research students is available on the Scholarships and Student Funding website. There is specific information for UK/EU students and for international postgraduate students. This includes internal and subject-specific information as well as UK Government and other external financial assistance:

[Funding for UK/EU students](#)

[Funding for international students](#)

[Scholarships and Student Funding](#)

UK Research and Innovation is the organisation which brings together the seven UK Research Councils (UKRC). Their website includes links to UKRC research funding information.

[UK Research and Innovation](#)

6.9 Degree and assessment regulations

Postgraduate research degrees are governed by the University's Postgraduate Degree Regulations. These include study and submission periods, leave of absence, interruptions, extensions and withdrawal from study. Supervision regulations and the grounds for award of doctoral degrees are also here, as well as any additional programme specific regulations.

The Postgraduate Degree regulations are in the Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study (DRPS) website.

[DRPS](#)

Research degrees are assessed under the University's Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees. These cover the conduct of assessment, including annual progression reviews, thesis assessment and viva, thesis regulations and assessment decisions.

Some research degrees may contain taught elements and these will be assessed under the University's Taught Assessment Regulations.

[Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees](#)

[Taught Assessment Regulations](#)

6.10 Student appeals

An appeal is a request for a decision to be reviewed in relation to progression, degree award, student conduct, fitness to practice or exclusion. Information on the Student Appeal Regulations, submitting an appeal and where to get advice is available on the University website.

[Supervisor role in appeals](#)

A supervisor's pastoral role continues after an appeal is lodged, even though the appeal might question the quality of supervision. After taking appropriate advice, supervisors will decide whether to assist the student in making their appeal case.

[Appeals](#)

6.11 Vacation Leave

Students can take up to six weeks' vacation time in a year, with agreement from their supervisor. There is no need to apply for an interruption of study when taking vacation leave.

6.12 Student maternity and parental leave

Students who are pregnant, about to become a parent or guardian, or adopt a child during their study should let their supervisor know so they can provide academic advice. Flexible arrangements can be put in place to support students who are to become parents and more information is available in the University student maternity policy:

The University's [Student Maternity and Family Leave Policy](#).

6.13 Complaints

The University's complaints procedure is designed to ensure that complaints are properly investigated and given careful and fair consideration. More information is available on the University Student website.

[Complaints](#)

6.14 Student conduct

Advice on expected conduct is also available on the University Student website. This includes rules and regulations, policies, procedures and codes of practice documents for all postgraduate students.

[Student conduct](#)

6.14.1 Academic misconduct

Academic misconduct, including plagiarism and cheating, is covered by the Code of Student Conduct. More information is available on the University website.

[Academic misconduct](#)

6.15 Links to useful resources

Alphabetical list of links to University regulations, policies, guidance and other useful information.

[The Advice Place](#) – Edinburgh University Students' Association's professional advice service

[Assessment Regulations](#)

[Authorised interruption of study or extension of study – Postgraduate Research](#)

[Complaint Procedure](#)

[Computing Regulations](#)

[Conduct, Student Code](#)

[Contacting Students by Email Policy](#)

[Data Protection - Use of Personal Data by Students](#)

[Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study \(DRPS\)](#)

[Dignity & Respect Policy](#)

[Disclosure of Information about Students - Guidelines](#)

[Equality and Diversity Policy](#)

[Edinburgh University Students' Association Postgraduate Activities](#)

[Glossary of Terms](#) – defines terms used in the Degree Regulations

[Graduations](#)

[Health and wellbeing](#)

[Including Publications in Postgraduate Research Theses, Guidance](#)

[Lay summary guidance](#)

[Library Regulations](#)

[Mental Health, Student Strategy](#)

[New students' website](#)

[Peer proofreading – The Advice Place scheme](#)

[Plagiarism guidelines](#)

[Postgraduate Research \(PGR\) Annual Progression Review Form software help \(PGR Supervisors\)](#)

[Postgraduate research supervisor network](#)

[Research Ethics and Integrity policies](#)

[No Smoking - University Policy](#)

[Social Media, University Guidelines](#)

[Student website - University](#) (including Health and Wellbeing, Academic Life, Careers, Money and Fees information)

[Student Appeal Regulations](#)

[Student Information Pages](#) (Scholarships and Student Funding, Student Information Points, Timetabling)

[Video linked viva examinations, Guidance](#)

References

[The Quality Code](#), Chapter B11: Research Degrees, QAA

University of Edinburgh Postgraduate Degree Regulations 2018/19

University of Edinburgh Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees 2018/19

DRAFT



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Postgraduate Research Supervision Handbook





Postgraduate Research Supervision Handbook

Roles & Responsibilities	1
Supervisors	2
Principal/Lead Supervisor	3
Co-Supervisor	4
Assistant Supervisor	5
Students	6
Student-Supervisor Relationship	7
Contact & key meetings	8
Annual progression monitoring	9
What happens if the supervisory relationship breaks down	10
Resolving Problems	11
Absences	12
Interruptions	13
Extensions	14
Special Circumstances	15
Withdrawal	16
Other information.....	17
Signposting where to find information on:	
Assessment	18
Thesis preparation/submission/resubmission	19
Annual progression review	20
Programme handbooks	21
Student Support Services	22
Wellbeing resources	23
Training & support for students and supervisors (IAD)	24
Fees and funding	25
Degree regulations	26
Other useful information	27

Introduction

The research student-supervisor relationships is of paramount importance in all research degrees. This Handbook provides guidance and practical advice for both supervisors and research students.

It sets out the expected standards for both students and staff, recognising the diversity of contexts and practices across the University. The Handbook also points to where more information can be found on University policies, regulations and practices for postgraduate research supervision.

The University aims to foster a vibrant, successful and interactive research community that generates ideas and discoveries, creates new fields of knowledge and makes a difference to the societal, cultural, environmental, health and wealth development of Scottish, UK and global communities.



Roles and responsibilities

At the University of Edinburgh, supervision is provided by teams of at least two supervisors for each doctoral student.

Supervisors are responsible for student supervision throughout their candidature and until the final thesis is submitted fulfilling all examiner requirements.

It is important that the key responsibilities of each member of the supervision team, including the student, are agreed by the team from the outset.

Supervision models may differ depending upon the discipline or programme of study and each programme handbook provides specific information on supervision arrangements.

Supervisors

1. Uphold the standards of professional behaviour expected of all University members.
2. Provide advice that is in the best interests of the student and their training, ability to progress and career development.
3. Ensure that the student has all agreed resources needed for their training.
4. Respect the student as a part of the University community.
5. Respect the intellectual property that belongs to the student.
6. Meet regularly with the student.
7. Provide prompt feedback on the student's work.
8. Keep the University informed about issues that affect the student.

Additionally, supervisors monitor students' progress with the plan for completion of the research. This plan will include specific research goals, their timing, sequence, and interdependencies.

Supervisors will be able to offer advice and direct the student to sources of careers information; for example the comprehensive careers guidance available from the Careers Service.

Supervisors also need to be aware of the University's student support facilities, such as the University Health Service, the Student Disability Service, the Student Counselling Service, the Advice Place, Careers Services, the Chaplaincy and Edinburgh Global.

Principal/Lead Supervisor role

The Principal Supervisor, sometimes referred to as Lead Supervisor in a Co-Supervisory team, has the main responsibility for supervision. They deal with administrative aspects of the supervision, for example funding body reporting and submitting concession requests.

Principal/Lead Supervisor responsibilities

The Principal Supervisor provides help and advice to the student on:

- Research training
- Choice of topic
- Organising the research
- Identifying any specific training needs
- Feedback on written work and any other component of the research
- Pastoral support (includes being alert to problems that might affect the student's ability to work effectively).

And is responsible for:

- Ensuring that facilities necessary for the project are available
- Facilitating contact with informal supervisors and advisers where necessary
- Arranging regular meetings with the student at which all matters relating to the student's research can be discussed, including feedback on written work (supervision meetings may be conducted online or via teleconferencing)
- Leading the student through the process of producing the thesis and its examination
- Identifying the student's development needs at the start of the degree and review and update these throughout the student's candidature
- Advising the student on drawing up a research plan, thesis structure and a timetable for completion of the work
- Helping the student prepare for the progression review where required
- Completing and submit on time to the appropriate postgraduate contact according to College guidelines, and complete all relevant reports required by Research Councils and other funding bodies, and ensure their transmission
- Providing advice on pastoral support as well as academic matters so that problems can be identified early on and appropriate steps taken to obtain concessions where needed, such as interruptions of study, absences from the University, leaves of absence and extensions
- Offering advice on other forms of output from the student's research, such as publication in journals and conference proceedings
- Advising on the final form of the thesis (see section 1.2.4) or any changes to the proposed form of the thesis
- Encouraging students to develop transferable skills and to attend appropriate training courses
- Helping keep the student on track for timely submission
- Checking that the thesis conforms to the University's requirements.

Co-Supervisors

A Co-Supervision model is normally chosen when it is clear that the student's proposal involves interdisciplinary research. The Co-Supervisor has equal responsibility to the Principal Supervisor in supervising the student's work.

When a co-supervisory model is necessary to support the research, this will be agreed at the time of the student's admission to candidature, or whenever it becomes apparent that the research requires interdisciplinary support. One of the supervisors will assume the role of Principal Supervisor. The Principal Supervisor and Co-Supervisor have equal roles and responsibilities for supervision, but the Principal Supervisor will be responsible for applications for concessions (for example interruptions and extensions), ensure that monitoring forms are completed, and meet other administrative responsibilities.

Both supervisors will assist the student to identify and define the topic of research, either before the student arrives at the University or soon after. If the interdisciplinary nature of the research topic develops later then the Principal Supervisor will consult with the student, identify an appropriate Co-Supervisor, and arrange the terms of the working relationship. Where the Principal and Co-Supervisors are from different Schools, the Principal Supervisor will obtain approval for the arrangement from the Postgraduate Directors of both Schools.

The Principal and Co-Supervisor are jointly responsible to the Postgraduate Director in the School in which the student is matriculated for the duties set out in section 2.3.2 and both will meet regularly with the student.

Assistant Supervisors

The role of the Assistant Supervisor entails fewer responsibilities than the Principal Supervisor, but in some cases may require closer day-to-day involvement in the student's research.

The role of the Assistant Supervisor is to:

- Support the approach to the main thesis topic addressed by the student and agreed with the Principal Supervisor (rather than offer an alternative approach), for example provide complementary expertise, such as specialised knowledge of a particular technique, or depending on the work context, provide day-to-day supervision in some cases
- Provide support and assistance if the Principal Supervisor is absent
- Meet with the student periodically
- Follow the student's progress
- Be fully involved in the annual reviews of the student's progress and comment on and sign the student's annual report form.

The role of the Assistant Supervisor will be regularised, agreed and understood by the supervisory team, the Postgraduate Director or Head of Graduate School and the student.

Supervisors in Associated Institutions

Staff employed by Associated Institutions may serve as supervisors. An employee of an Associated Institution may serve as a Principal Supervisor if:

- The student is working full time in the Associated Institution
- The Co-Supervisor or Assistant Supervisor(s) are University employees
- The Principal Supervisor from the Associated Institution is prepared to take on supervisory responsibilities as if they were working within the University and complies with the roles and responsibilities outlined in this Code of Practice
- The arrangement is approved by the College Committee.

Supervisors employed by Associated Institutions are required to participate in the University's supervisor briefing sessions. The University Co-Supervisor and the Postgraduate Director will ensure that the Principal Supervisor from the Associated Institution has read the University's procedures and Codes of Practice. The University Co-Supervisor, Postgraduate Director and College committee with responsibility for postgraduate matters will monitor student progress through formal annual reporting. Students working in an Associated Institution have the same rights and responsibilities as those working in a University School. They will also be subject to any additional rules of the Associated Institution.

Students

- Uphold the standards of professional behaviour expected of all University members.
- Conform to the conditions of their funding and the regulations of the University.
- Take charge of and dedicate themselves to their own development and completion of their degree.
- Make the best efforts to achieve agreed goals and timetable.
- Acknowledge their sources of funding and the work of others in all publications and presentations.
- Show respect to all University members, whether students, academic staff, administration or support.
- Respect the intellectual property that belongs to others.
- Keep their supervisor and the University informed of absences and issues that affect their ability to progress.
- Keep the University and supervisor informed about contact details.
- Let the University know of issues that affect the safety, well-being and performance of other University members.

Student responsibilities

During candidature students are responsible for their own development as researchers and for developing their projects. Students will:

- Acquaint themselves with the standards expected of the relevant degree in their subject (PhD, MPhil, MSc by Research or taught professional doctorate)
- Undertake any training as recommended by their Principal Supervisor
- Take advantage of the facilities and supervision offered in the University
- Fulfil the requirements of their research degree programme
- Work diligently and effectively throughout the period of their candidature
- Work as a professional, independent researcher accountable for the development of their own research
- Engage with student representation processes and elections so that Postgraduate Research Reps can work with them to improve their University experience and the Students' Association can adequately represent postgraduate research students
- Acknowledge the work of other scholars and researchers on whom they draw (See also section 6 on plagiarism and cheating.)
- Produce a thesis that makes a significant contribution to knowledge
- Submit the completed thesis on time
- Ensure that the thesis is their own work and acknowledges sources correctly (See section 7 on plagiarism and cheating.)
- Actively seek advice and help from the sources identified in this Code if problems arise.

Responsibility for the Quality of the Thesis

Responsibility for the quality of the thesis submitted for assessment resides with the student rather than the supervisory team or the University. Possible examination outcomes are listed in the Assessment Regulations. After assessment, the examiners make recommendations to the College Postgraduate Committee or Board, who then decide on the basis of the examiners' reports whether the thesis passes, or if further work is required.

[Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees](#)

Team Working

The University recognises the substantial benefits of team working, including with other students and staff, and encourages joint publication. In the thesis submitted for assessment the examiners will need to be able to identify and assess the individual work of the candidate. It is the student's responsibility to indicate clearly which parts of the thesis describe work done by others. See section 3.5.9 on the inclusion of joint publications in the thesis.

The Student-Supervisor Relationship

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Contact and key meetings

Postgraduate research students rely on contact with their supervisors for guidance and intellectual input to their research. Supervisors will maintain regular contact with their students. Students have a responsibility to make themselves available at times agreed with their supervisors. Supervisors may be available for consultation during office hours and outside of scheduled meeting times.

The first nine months of candidature are crucial in setting the agenda of the research. The University regulations specify that the student and supervisor will maintain frequent contact and meet at least twice in every three month period. The student can initiate meetings, but the supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the requirement for the minimum number of meetings is met.

Keeping Records of Key Meetings

The University requires students and supervisors to back up guidance and decisions with written (or emailed) communication. The student and supervisor will keep a record of their key meetings. The student will produce a record of the meeting and forward it to their supervisor for agreement. This record is an essential part of the University's quality assurance and enhancement process and will include:

- Date of the meeting
- Purpose of the meeting
- Any specific problems identified
- Action points.

Annual progression monitoring

Supervisors are responsible for monitoring student progress and reporting annually to the Graduate Office and College postgraduate committee or board. Appropriate milestones for each year of study will be agreed between the supervisor and the student. (See section X on annual progression review.)

The progression review provides the formal report by the supervisor on the student's progress, although some Schools have additional requirements. The first progression review will indicate that the area of study has been defined, and each annual progression review will:

- Form the basis for the decision to confirm degree registration
- Provide a record of achievements to date and confirm that any conditions of registration have been met

Students will also report on:

- Any programme of skills training required by their research
- Transferable skills development.

Supervisors will be frank about any difficulties that have arisen and will give their views on the prospect of successful completion. The supervisor will provide the student with a written report outlining these. Supervisors can recommend that a student matriculated for an MPhil re-register for a PhD if merited by the project and the student's performance, or that a student matriculated for a PhD might re-register for an MPhil, or discontinue study (see recommendations in section 3.3.8).

Recommendations Following the Progression Review

In consultation with their Postgraduate Director, supervisors will recommend to the College Postgraduate Committee or Board the future of the student's candidature. The supervisors will provide feedback to the student, but the student is not involved in the progression decision.

The recommendations available following the annual review are set out in the Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees.

Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees

If the annual progress review indicates serious problems or requests for extensions to the period of study then the College Postgraduate Committee or Board will examine annual reports for:

- Indications of how the difficulties arose
- What steps were taken by supervisor and student to deal with them at an early stage.

Note that on behalf of the Committee or Board, the chair (or Postgraduate Dean) may undertake this assessment with advice from the Postgraduate Office.

If the student's research changes direction and diverges from the supervisors' expertise then the supervisors will review their own competence to deal with the new research area. In this case:

- The School can recommend a change in supervisors to the College Postgraduate Research Committee or Board.

What happens if the supervisory relationship breaks down

Most interpersonal problems will be avoided if the student, supervisors, and other members of the University community contribute responsibly and professionally to their working relationship by being respectful, courteous, punctual and conscientious.

The University seeks to provide equal opportunities for its students and staff. Respect, trust, confidence and fairness are essential elements in the relationship between supervisor and student. The Dignity and Respect policy promotes a positive culture for working and studying to which every student and member of staff contributes and within which they are able to fulfil their potential. Breaches of the policy include, but are not limited to, harassment, bullying, discrimination and inappropriate remarks or behaviour, and all University staff and students will observe the obligations outline in the policy.

Dignity and Respect Policy

If for any reason students feel unable to confide in their supervisors they should approach the Postgraduate Adviser in their subject area, or the School's Postgraduate Director. If the problem is not able to be resolved, the student or supervisor may then consult with the Secretary or Chair of the College committee. University staff will treat such information as confidential and will limit disclosures to as few colleagues as necessary to resolve the problem. Such avenues are also appropriate when the supervisor-student relationship seems to have broken down or needs to be amended (for example if the supervisor changes institution).

Where the supervisor-student relationship seems to have broken down and problems are not able to be resolved locally, both the supervisor and the student must consider mediation. Mediation is a voluntary process, however the University will always seek to resolve conflict in a positive way and therefore will require the parties who are in conflict to give informed consideration to mediation as a means of resolving the conflict. Schools can request mediation from the College who can contact the University's accredited mediator in Human Resources for advice.

Resolving Problems

Absences, interruptions and extensions to study are concessions for which students must have appropriate approval.

Schools and supervisors reviewing requests for interruptions and other concessions will take account of any adjustments put in place for individual students.

Absences

Absence of the Principal Supervisor

Schools will make alternative arrangements for supervision in the event that the Principal Supervisor is absent for more than six consecutive weeks, including during University vacation periods. The student will be notified formally of any such arrangements.

Leave of Absence

Students, who are not on a recognised distance learning programme, may need to conduct some of their research for long periods in locations outside of Edinburgh, including overseas. A leave of absence is required for compulsory or optional activity, away from Edinburgh, that is related to the programme of study. Colleges will authorise a formal request if it:

- Benefits the research programme
- Is not detrimental to the research and the student's development and participation in the University's academic community
- Does not conflict with any other requirement of the student's programme of study
- Does not conflict with any obligations to be available for on-campus activity
- Has a working timetable agreed by supervisors and student
- Has an agreed method and frequency for submitting written work and receiving feedback, established by the supervisors and student.

Colleges will provide further information on how leave of absence changes are approved and recorded, as well as how the student will be supported during the leave period.

Leave of Absence for International Students

Students who hold a Tier 4 visa are normally required to carry out all studies on University premises. Where a study location change is required (in accordance with section 3.3.1), the University is required to report to the Home Office informing them of the new location of studies, and the duration of the absence. In some cases, it may be appropriate for the University to withdraw sponsorship of the student's Tier 4 visa for the duration of the absence, and the student will need to make a new visa application if they return to the UK for studies. It is, therefore, important that Tier 4 students seek full advice from Edinburgh Global before proceeding with a leave of absence request. See section 2.4.

Vacation Leave

Students may be absent from their studies for up to six weeks of the year without applying for an interruption of study, and should notify their supervisors and the School Postgraduate Office of any such planned absences.

Authorised Interruption of Study

Students unable to study for a period of time can apply for an interruption to their period of study. Application for interruption of study:

Will be made formally to the School or College postgraduate office using the appropriate request form

Will be made in advance of the period of interruption, not in retrospect

Will have an impact on a student's visa - advice is available from Edinburgh Global.

Should be accompanied by verification of need if applicable, such as a medical certificate.

An interruption of study cannot be granted after the maximum period of study has elapsed.

Permitted periods of authorised interruption of study are set out in the [Postgraduate Degree Regulations](#). If the need for the interruption is sudden and unforeseen then the application must be made as soon as practical. In any case, the student will notify the supervisor as soon as the need for the interruption arises, or encounters a problem that will affect the progress of their study. An approved interruption of study postpones the date at which the student's total permitted period of study will end. Students applying for interruptions need to investigate how any alteration to their period of study will affect external conditions such as their funding, visa, or council tax arrangements. The Advice Place can advise students on the funding and council tax implications of interruptions. Advice on the implication of interruption for a student with a Tier 4 visa is available from Edinburgh Global.

[Postgraduate Degree Regulations](#)

[The Advice Place](#)

[Edinburgh Global](#)

Extension to the Period of Study

Students who are unable to submit their thesis within their prescribed period of study, plus any permitted submission period (see section 1.2.3) need to apply formally for an extension. The formal application will include:

- A statement outlining the academic reasons for the delay
- A plan of work towards submitting the thesis, with milestones and specific dates agreed with the supervisors.

Supervisors will monitor closely the student's plan for completion. Extensions to the period of study are exceptional and not automatic.

- Students can only request up to 12 months at a time.
- The maximum total period of extensions is 24 months.
- Students must submit their thesis within 12 months of the end of the prescribed period of study.
- If required, students must apply for extensions of study before the end of their maximum submission date (for example, within four years for a full-time PhD).

Further information on periods of study is available in the Degree Regulations:

[DRPS Study Period Table](#)

Students applying for extensions need to investigate how any alteration to their period of study will affect external conditions such as their funding, visa, or council tax arrangements. See

[Authorised interruption of study or extension of study – Postgraduate Research](#)

Special Circumstances

Special circumstances are circumstances beyond a student's control which are exceptional for the individual student, are beyond that student's control and for which there is sufficient evidence to show that they had a significant adverse impact on research performance, attendance or assessment submissions. For example, significant short-term illness, or bereavement or serious illness of a person with whom the student has a close relationship, can be examples of special circumstances.

Students whose circumstances are affecting their ability to engage with their studies should discuss them with their Principal Supervisor in the first instance.

For postgraduate research students, students with special circumstances that are disrupting their studies can be supported by being offered authorised interruption or extension of study. However, there may be occasions when personal circumstances have an impact on assessment, such as annual progression review meetings or the oral examination. In these circumstances, it may be possible either to reschedule the progression review meeting or oral examination, or to make some adjustments

to the format of the meeting. It may also be appropriate for the College Postgraduate Committee or Board to take account of these circumstances when considering the recommendations from a progression review or oral examination. Students should notify their Principal Supervisor, Postgraduate Director or Postgraduate Adviser in writing of any special circumstance before the meeting of the examiners or College Committee or Board meeting.

Examples of circumstances that might have a significant impact include:

- physical illness or injury;
- mental ill-health or similar illness;
- bereavement or serious illness of a person with whom the student has a close relationship;
- a long-term relationship breakdown, such as a marriage.

Examples of circumstances that are unlikely to be accepted include:

- pressure of academic work;
- employment commitments;
- a short-term, self-certificated illness, such as a common cold.

For taught components undertaken by postgraduate research students, the University's Special Circumstances Policy applies.

[Special Circumstances Policy](#)

Withdrawal from Study

Withdrawal from studies is a voluntary decision by the student. Any student may withdraw permanently from the University at any point in the year. However, a student may not voluntarily withdraw after a College, or the University, has decided to exclude the student (see 3.3.8).

Before applying to withdraw, the student is strongly advised to consult their supervisor in order to consider the implications of withdrawal.

Other information

Where to find additional information and sources of advice.

Assessment

Appointment of Examiners

Each student is assessed by at least one External Examiner and one Internal Examiner. In the case of an interdisciplinary topic and on the advice of the supervisors, the College postgraduate committee may appoint a second external examiner.

The choice of examiners will take into account:

- Their expertise in the discipline of the thesis
- Their ability to provide an impartial assessment of the submitted work
- Their availability to examine the thesis.

Regulations for appointment of examiners are set out in the [Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees](#).

Assessment of Students who are also Members of Staff

Regulations for assessment of members of staff candidates are set out in the [Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees](#).

Appointment of a Chair for the Oral Examination

The School will nominate the chair the oral examination. This will be the Internal Examiner unless a Non-Examining Chair has been appointed. The regulations governing appointment of Non-Examining Chairs are set out in the [Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees](#).

Date of the Oral Examination

The oral examination will normally be held within three months of thesis submission. The date of the oral examination depends on:

- The date the Notice of Intention to Submit is presented to the School or College postgraduate office
- The date the thesis is submitted by the student
- The time it takes to select and appoint examiners
- The period the examiners require to examine the thesis
- The availability of all parties to meet for the oral examination, including any visa restrictions on the student's availability.

Responsibility for the Outcome of the Assessment

The thesis is the student's own work and the student is responsible for its eventual quality as assessed by the examiners. Approval by the supervisors is not a guarantee of a favourable assessment outcome. If the supervisors have any concerns about the quality of the thesis then they need to communicate this, in writing, to the student as soon as possible prior to the proposed submission date. Such advice may also include recommending to the College postgraduate committee that the student be re-registered for a different degree and the thesis is submitted for a different degree, for example an MPhil is submitted for examination as a PhD, or a PhD is submitted for examination as an MPhil.

Assessment Criteria

The criteria for assessment of research theses, the procedure governing the examination and the recommendations open to examiners are described in the regulations.

Degree Programme Regulations

Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees

The examiners are asked to assess the thesis in terms of the grounds for the award of degree set out in the regulations. Examiners will arrive at their own assessment even if parts of the work have already been peer reviewed for publication. The purpose of the assessment is to allow the examiners to establish that the thesis is satisfactory. As part of their written report, examiners will be asked:

- Is the thesis an original work that makes a significant contribution to knowledge in or understanding of the field of knowledge?
- Does the thesis contain material worthy of publication?
- Does the thesis demonstrate adequate knowledge of the field of study and relevant literature?
- Does the thesis show the exercise of critical judgement with regard to both the student's work and that of other scholars in the same general field?
- Is the presentation and style of the thesis satisfactory?

Examiners will also be asked if they think the student needs to make any corrections, amendments or major revisions to the thesis.

The Assessment Process

The thesis is assessed by the examiners and an oral examination is held for doctoral and MPhil degrees.

The examiners provide an initial report to the College before oral examination and deliver their assessment and recommendations to the College postgraduate board after the oral examination. The College postgraduate board takes the final decision on the degree award.

Supervisor Presence at the Oral Examination

Supervisors may attend the oral examination as observers, if the student and examiners consent to this. On such occasions supervisors:

- may take notes
- will not comment during the examination
- will leave the examination room with the student
- will not participate in the discussion and decision of the examiners
- will absent themselves at any stage if the student requests this.

Organisation of the Oral Examination

An oral examination will be held to assess a student's PhD or MPhil thesis. Arrangements for the oral examination are the responsibility of the Internal Examiner, who also chairs the meeting of the examiners unless a Non-Examining Chair is appointed. These arrangements, including the date and place of the oral examination and the names of all participants, will be provided in advance to all those who are to be present. Students staying overseas must be prepared to return to the UK for the examination, unless other arrangements are made as outlined in section 3.6.3.

Examination away from Edinburgh

- The normal expectation is that the oral examination will be held in Edinburgh. However, in exceptional circumstances arrangements can be made for remote assessment by video link, which may be at a meeting venue outside of the UK.

This requires agreement from the College postgraduate committee or board, the student, all examiners and any Non-Examining Chair.

Guidance on video linked viva examinations

Examiner Recommendations

The examiners may recommend that the thesis pass without amendment or further work. In this case the candidate may not make further alteration to the thesis.

The examiners may specify minor corrections, to be completed without further supervision or further research, or more substantial further work requiring supervision.

The examiners will also be required to specify the time frame in which further work is to be completed. Any corrections required by the examiners to publications that are already in the public domain, will be indicated via corrections and revisions to the introductions and conclusions in the body of the thesis. In the case of a portfolio component to the thesis, examiners may also request that publications be removed from the thesis or replaced with alternative material.

Alternatively, the examiners may recommend the award of, or resubmission for, a different degree or a fail. Full details of examiner recommendations are available in the assessment regulations:

[Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees](#)
[Guidance on Including Publications in Postgraduate Research Theses](#)

Notification of Examiner Recommendations

The examiners may tell the candidate what their views are at the end of or after the oral examination, and they will make clear that their view is a recommendation to the College committee and not a final decision. After inspecting the examiners' reports the committee reserves the right to modify or change the examiners' recommendation.

Thesis preparation/submission/resubmission

The Submitted Thesis

The student is responsible for producing the thesis in the time allotted and to the required quality. The thesis will:

- Be the student's own work, except where indicated throughout the thesis and summarised clearly on the declarations page of the thesis
- Make an original and significant contribution to knowledge in the field of study
- Contain material suitable for wider dissemination
- Show adequate knowledge of the field of study and of the relevant literature
- Demonstrate critical judgement of the candidate's own work and that of other scholars in the field
- Present a coherent body of work.

Written aspects of the thesis will:

- Be satisfactory in literary presentation
- Include full and adequate references
- Present a coherent structure
- Make clear the intentions of the work, its background, methods and conclusions
- Be understandable to a scholar in the same field.

Thesis Length

The Postgraduate Degree Regulations specify the maximum length of the written thesis. The maximum length applies to the length of the body of the thesis. This body includes the main text, preface material, footnotes and references, but does not include material in any appendices, bibliography, abstract or lay summary (see section 3.7.3). Note that any appendices are examined at the discretion of the examiners. If a longer thesis is required for adequate treatment of the thesis topic, the supervisor will seek the approval of the College committee with responsibility for postgraduate research matters prior to submission.

Postgraduate Degree Regulations

The Thesis and Joint Publications

Candidates are encouraged to publish their research during their candidature, and provision is made for articles and papers to be bound in the thesis. Where the thesis includes the results of team working the thesis will be more than a compendium of jointly authored articles, and will include information that makes it possible for the examiners to track the individual work of the candidate. Where the thesis includes collaborative publications this must be made clear in the thesis and stated on the signed declaration (section 3.7.3):

- The candidate's role in any joint work.
- The nature of team involvement in any experimental procedures
- How the team involvement facilitated the findings of the research.

Portfolio Material

The Postgraduate Degree Regulations and programme handbook specify any further requirements for designs, composition, artworks, or performances and their display, presentation and documentation.

Where the body of the thesis is to consist in whole or in part of a portfolio of conference, workshop or journal publications or published book chapters (submitted for review, in press or in the public domain) then the thesis will demonstrate coherence by

- The choice and ordering of the publications in the thesis
- An introduction to the compilation, including a discussion of the relevance of any included publications to the whole thesis, and an explanation of any repetition of content across the publications
- In addition to any conclusion to and summary of the thesis, a conclusion to the compilation that ties together the themes of the publications with any other material within the thesis
- An introduction preceding each publication that explains the context, and any co-author or team contributions
- A single concluding alphabetically ordered reference list.

Supplementary Material

A candidate may wish to provide additional data or presentation material in electronic form. This electronic material may help the examiners to understand and assess the thesis. Electronic material may be provided as a file upload in the case of electronic submission, or on portable media included with the printed thesis. Such material will supplement the thesis and the examiners may choose to take it into account in their assessment.

Lay Summary

The lay summary is intended to facilitate knowledge exchange, public awareness and outreach. It should be written in simple, non-technical terms that are easily understandable by a lay audience, who may be non-professional, non-scientific and outside the research area. The lay summary is included with the thesis submitted for assessment, although it is not assessed by the examiners, but can be discussed with the supervisor at any stage prior to the final thesis being lodged with the Edinburgh Research Archive. The lay summary is to be produced in a standard format. After examination the candidate will need to provide a lay summary in the final thesis.

[Lay summary form](#)

[Lay summary guidance](#)

Revisions to the Thesis

The supervisor's role may continue after the examination. If minor corrections are required or the student needs to correct deficiencies in the thesis then these will be communicated to the candidate and to the supervisor. The supervisor will confirm the necessary revisions with the candidate. The examiners' joint report will be made available to the candidate and their supervisor for further guidance on the general quality of the thesis and level of the candidate's knowledge. The revised thesis is then checked by the Internal Examiner. The External Examiner may also ask to check the corrections.

Thesis Resubmission

The examiners may recommend resubmission for the same, or a different, degree after a further period of study under supervision. The thesis will normally be re-examined by the original examiners, and a second oral examination may be held.

The supervisor should offer guidance to the candidate on the steps necessary to meet the requirements expressed by the examiners and will provide further supervision as appropriate. If resubmission is required:

- The candidate will be given a clear written statement prepared by the examiners and approved by the relevant College committee of the aspects that require revision.
- The resubmitted thesis may be assessed only against this written statement on re-examination, and the examiners will not introduce new criticisms of previously examined material.
- The written statement of the aspects of the thesis that require revision cannot subsequently be altered without the agreement of that committee.

If the College committee fails the thesis then the candidate will be provided with a written statement explaining the decision. In these circumstances the supervisor will discuss the outcome with the student. The College Postgraduate Dean is also available to talk with the student if requested.

[Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees](#)

Final Submission of the Assessed Thesis

At the end of the assessment process all successful doctoral and MPhil candidates are required to submit the final version of their thesis to the University in electronic form in addition to one hardbound copy. From March 2017, the Library will prefer online submission of the PDF instead of handing in a CD with the hardbound copy. Hardbound copies should conform to the [Standards for the Format and Binding of a Thesis](#):

[How to submit the final version of your PhD thesis](#)

Online Access to the Thesis

Candidates should discuss with their supervisor the implications of publishing the thesis online in the Edinburgh Research Archive (ERA). The student can restrict access to the thesis or parts of the thesis if

- the thesis contains confidential or sensitive data
- the candidate intends to publish the whole thesis or extracts from it.

The candidate can restrict access to the electronic version of the thesis as indicated above in section 3.7.3. If the candidate wishes the electronic embargo to be longer than one year then this must be negotiated with the ERA administrators. ERA will release an embargoed thesis for download at the end of the restriction period.

Annual progression review

The University provides an online annual progression monitoring system and requires Schools and supervisors to review student progress within nine to 12 months for each year of full time or part-time study for doctoral and MPhil degrees. By this time the student will have produced an identifiable body of work that has been generated independently and that can be assessed. This will normally form the basis for confirmation of degree registration, or permission to progress.

- a. The first review will take place within nine to 12 months of the student's matriculation.
- a. Progress in subsequent years is assessed at nine to 12 month intervals until thesis submission, or more frequently if recommended by the Graduate Office for the individual student (see *h* below)..
- a. The student will attend a review meeting and is required to provide a presentation or report prior to the meeting. The student may also be required to prepare an oral presentation.

- a. The student's electronic submission will include a forward plan of their work.
- a. An assessment panel will review the student's presentation or report. The assessment panel will include the supervisory team and at least one other person (reviewer).
- a. After each review, students are provided with feedback from the assessment panel. The student, supervisors, reviewer and School Postgraduate Director then sign-off the online report before it is submitted to the College.
- a. Similar procedures apply to part-time students, and reviews of part-time students will also take place within nine to 12 months of their matriculation. The reviewers will make allowance in their assessment for the part-time status of the student's candidature.
- a. If the progression review indicates concerns about a student's progress, then a further review will take place within three months. (Only one repeat review may be undertaken before confirmation of registration.)
- a. If the assessment panel identifies a serious problem, or advises discontinuation, then the student will be interviewed. Students will not be discontinued until they are given an opportunity to respond to the assessment. See section 3.3.8 on discontinuation of study.

The progression review provides the formal report by the supervisor on the student's progress, although some Schools have additional requirements. The first progression review will indicate that the area of study has been defined, and each annual progression review will:

- Form the basis for the decision to confirm degree registration
- Provide a record of achievements to date and confirm that any conditions of registration have been met

Schools will explain to postgraduate research students the School's review requirements. The annual review may include any of several components, such as:

- A timetable for progress agreed by the student and supervisory team
- A record of whether deadlines have been met
- The results of coursework examined by written tests or continuous assessment
- Assessments of presentations and reports of directed reading or specific project work
- The results of interviews about progress.

Students will also report on:

- Any programme of skills training required by their research
- Transferable skills development.

Practices will vary according to School and discipline, but by the end of the second year a student in the social sciences, arts and the humanities will be expected to produce a substantial piece of writing beyond that submitted in the first year. In the case of practice-based research the student will have by the second year assembled a substantial part of their portfolio and any relevant documentation.

Recommendations Following the Progression Review

The recommendations available following the annual review are set out in the Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees.

Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees

If the annual progress review indicates serious problems or requests for extensions to the period of study then the College Postgraduate Committee or Board will examine annual reports for:

- Indications of how the difficulties arose
- What steps were taken by supervisor and student to deal with them at an early stage.

Note that on behalf of the Committee or Board, the chair (or Postgraduate Dean) may undertake this assessment with advice from the Postgraduate Office.

If the student's research changes direction and diverges from the supervisors' expertise then the supervisors will review their own competence to deal with the new research area. In this case:

- The School can recommend a change in supervisors to the College Postgraduate Research Committee or Board.

Programme handbooks

Programme and course handbooks are part of the academic governance framework of the University and are referenced in the Degree Programme Regulations. Therefore, as well as providing information for students on their programme and courses, they can be used to stipulate requirements.

- A source of information and guidance for students on a specific programme or group of programmes.
- Work in conjunction with degree programme tables, degree programme specifications, degree programme regulations, and assessment regulations to provide students with all the information they require for their studies.
- A collection of information and "signposts" to information that exists elsewhere.
- Contain core content.
- An information resource for staff, external examiners, and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies.

Core content includes supervision arrangements, thesis (or equivalent) requirements, research skills training, professional development, teaching opportunities and research culture. Programme organisation, assessment and feedback, key contacts and locations, student support services, feedback information, attendance requirements, student representation structure, data protection and health and safety information.

Student Support Services

The University, Colleges and Schools provide a comprehensive range of support services to enable students to make the most of their time as members of the University community. Many of the University's student support services offer services on an online basis as well as face to face, although the range of services that distance students can access may be more limited than those available for on-campus students.

The Advice Place

The Advice Place is home to the Students' Association's professional advice team offering students free, impartial and confidential information on everything and anything including funding, accommodation, student welfare, and academic matters. For full details on the range of advice on offer, advice visit:

[The Advice Place](#)

Student Representation

The Students' Association and Schools facilitate effective student representation across the University. At the beginning of each academic year, Schools will elect Postgraduate Student Representatives ('Reps') who will be trained and supported by the Students' Association and will work closely with their Postgraduate Director. If postgraduate research students think services and support should be improved, they should work with their Student Reps to improve the student experience. In addition, students will elect a Postgraduate Research Rep and five Sabbatical Officers who represent all students across the University.

English Language Tuition

English Language Education (ELE) provides classes, workshops, and materials for international students at the University who would benefit from English language support whilst studying for their degree. (See also section 2.4.1 above.)

If School staff feel a student needs help with English, the Supervisor can refer the student to ELE directly, even if the student has not taken the Test of English at Matriculation (TEAM). The student will then be offered English language tuition, or independent study materials and advice.

Library Collections and Services

A wide range of library services, collections and study spaces are provided to support both taught and research elements of students' work. Collections include print and digital books and journals, rare books and special collections, artworks, images, museum items and archives. Digital and print library resources are available for students based in Edinburgh. In addition to purchased electronic resources, printed library materials are digitised where possible for students undertaking online or distance learning. There is an Academic Support Librarian allocated to each School.

Their role is to provide advice and assistance on using library services and collections, demonstrate the use of information resources by arranging subject-specific information skills sessions, give help with students' research by arranging one-to-one advice sessions, and advise on research data management.

[Academic Support Librarians](#)

[Library services](#)

Computing Resources

The University assumes that students will be computer literate and competent in use of the web and communication by email. All students are provided with a University email account and the University treats email correspondence via the student's University account as the official and sufficient means of communication. See:

[Policy on the use of email for contacting students](#)

Schools will ensure that students have access to specialised computing facilities where required, and that students receive appropriate training. Training will cover the means of access to computing facilities and essential components of their use, as relevant to particular degree programmes and research projects.

Information Services provides a wide range of advice on all aspects of computing and IT.

[IS Computing Services](#)

Student Disability Service

The Student Disability Service provides information and advice to University staff, including Programme Directors, supervisors and support staff, as well as to disabled students. Amongst their range of services, staff in the Student Disability Service will:

- Determine a range of reasonable adjustments based on an assessment of the student's needs which Schools must implement in line with the provisions of the Equality Act 2010. Advise supervisors and support staff on how best to support disabled students
- Advise on specific support adjustments to study, examination and assessment procedures
- Provide a range of student support assistants who can carry out tasks such as proofreading texts, assist in the library and act as notetakers
- Support students to apply for statutory or University funding, if they are entitled to Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) or equivalent funding for international and EU students
- Provide training on request in response to requests from academic and other University staff.

Students with impairments (this includes dyslexia, long term mental health problems, students on the autistic spectrum, as well as physical and sensory impairments) that will impact on study should contact the Student Disability Service as soon as possible in their candidature. See:

[Student Disability Service](#)

For regulations relating to “Reasonable Adjustments” see:

[Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees](#)

Wellbeing resources

Student Counselling Service

The Student Counselling Service offers one-to-one counselling, workshops and consultation, and training for staff. The service aims to help students work through their difficulty, understand themselves better and find ways of managing their situation.

Health and wellbeing

Details of a range of services provided by the University and throughout Edinburgh for your physical and mental wellbeing are available on the University’s Student website.

[Health and wellbeing](#)

Information for staff on the wide range of health promoting activities across the University is available on the Staff website.

[Staff health and wellbeing](#)

Training & support for students and supervisors

Study Skills

The University, Schools and Support Services provide information, support and training for the development of research and transferable skills. These skills are vital for development as an independent researcher and important for progression beyond the degree. Skills can be developed as an integral part of supervision and may be provided through credit-bearing research methods courses. Additional support is provided through a variety of training courses, online resources and engagement with the research community, including tutoring and demonstrating activity.

Colleges, Schools, the Institute for Academic Development (IAD), the Careers Service, the Students’ Association, Information Services, doctoral training centres and partnerships and other groups provide training in transferable skills and professional development. Resources for developing skills are also available online and in University libraries.

Supervisors will work with their students to encourage attendance on the appropriate training courses. The University encourages postgraduate students to take the initiative in their development and record their own portfolio of skills, including:

- Attendance on regular training and development opportunities in accordance with their personal development needs and the demands of their research
- Use of e-learning opportunities
- Use of the library and online resources
- Engagement with the research community including presenting at seminars, tutoring and demonstrating, producing publications and attending conferences.

Supervisor support and development

Information and guidance for staff who supervise postgraduate research students is available on the Institute for Academic Development website. This include information on supervisor briefings and the Postgraduate Research Supervisor Network.

[Postgraduate research supervisors](#)

Fees and funding

Scholarships and student funding

The University’s Scholarships and Student Funding provide a single point of contact for prospective and enrolled students in finding the financial help and information they need in order to pursue their education.

[Scholarships and student funding](#)

Continuation Fees

Students continuing study beyond the period for which annual fees are payable are required to pay one matriculation fee during the submission period and then a continuation fee for every authorised extension until they submit their thesis. Continuation fees are charged pro rata for the full period of an approved extension. During the prescribed period of study, the matriculation fee is included in the tuition fee.

[University continuation fee information](#)

Degree regulations

The University’s postgraduate research degree programmes are governed by Postgraduate Degree Regulations. These regulations define the rules of supervision, the grounds for award of degrees, attendance and participation requirements for students and the length of study period for a research degree. You will also find regulations on leave of absence, interruption of study, extension to study and withdrawal and exclusion from study in the Postgraduate Degree Regulations. The regulations are on the Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study website

[The University's Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study](#)

Assessment of doctoral theses is governed by the Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees. These regulations cover the conduct of assessment, including student responsibilities for assessment requirements and deadlines, the timing and outcomes for annual progression reviews, thesis format, submission and resubmission, all the possible outcomes following thesis assessment and specific regulations relating to MSc by Research degrees.

[The Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees.](#)

Other useful information

Links to University regulations, policies, guidance and other useful information.

[Assessment Regulations](#)

[Authorised interruption of study or extension of study – Postgraduate Research](#)

[Complaint Procedure](#)

[Computing Regulations](#)

[Conduct, Student Code](#)

[Contacting Students by Email Policy](#)

[Data Protection - Use of Personal Data by Students](#)

[Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study](#)

[Dignity & Respect Policy](#)

[Disclosure of Information about Students - Guidelines](#)

[Equality and Diversity Policy](#)

Available from the Students' Association:

Edinburgh University Students' Association, *Postgraduate Guide*

A range of guides about welfare and other issues are available from the Advice Place:

[The Advice Place - Guides](#)

[Glossary of Terms](#)

[Health and wellbeing](#)

[Including Publications in Postgraduate Research Theses, Guidance](#)

[Lay summary guidance](#)

[Library Regulations](#)

[Mental Health, Student Strategy](#)

[New students' website](#)

[Plagiarism guidelines](#)

[PGR Annual Review Form software help \(PGR Supervisors\)](#)

[Postgraduate research supervisor network](#)

[Research - Code of Practice](#)

[No Smoking - University Policy](#)

[Social Media, University Guidelines](#)

[Student website - University](#) (including Health and Wellbeing, Academic Life, Careers, Money and Fees information)

[Student Appeal Regulations](#)

[Student Information Pages](#) (Scholarships and Student Funding, Student Information Points, Timetabling)

[Video linked viva examinations, Guidance](#)

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Committee Achievements 2017/18

Executive Summary

Progress on priorities identified in report to Senate June 2017:

- **Excellence in Doctoral Education and Career Development**
 - Supervisor support – continuing to 2018/19 Semester 1
 - Mentoring and Wellbeing – Committee actions to be discussed. Content added to new Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students
 - Professional and Personal Development Record – Task Group submitted final report December 2017 – recommendations transmitted to Service Excellence Programme for further consideration of implementation.
- **Review of the Code of Practice for Tutors and Demonstrators**

Completed. Task Group report submitted and new policy published replacing Code of Practice. Committee to be involved in monitoring implementation.
- **Review of the Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students**

In progress – draft and redesign to be submitted to April meeting (Paper REC 17/18 4C). Proposed some content for addition to Postgraduate Degree Regulations and Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degree for consideration by Curriculum and Student Progression Committee.
- **Enlightenment Scholarships**

Proposed changes to the scholarship documentation and agreed an oversight management group reporting annually to REC.
- **Support for Early Career Researchers**

In progress – Committee endorsed framework (Taking Control of your Research Career) submitted by Director of Researcher Development (IAD) September 2017. Progress report to be planned for June 2018 meeting.

Progress on additional items identified by the Committee:

- **Supervisor roles**

Agreed further consultation exercise on roles and responsibilities.
- **Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)**

Reviewed institutional results and to facilitate Heads of Graduate Schools discussion on emerging institutional themes. Report on discussion planned for June Committee meeting.

- **PhD with Integrated Study**
Agreed further consultation on experience of Centres for Doctoral Training and PhD with Integrated Study. Report submitted to April meeting for consideration of guidance for Schools (Paper REC 17/18 4B).
- **Distance/Flexible PhD**
Progress report planned for June Committee meeting.

How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?

Aligns with the University's Strategic Objective of Leadership in Research and the Committee's priorities for 2017/18.

Action requested

To note formally.

How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?

The paper provides an update on progress and no actions are associated with it.

Resource / Risk / Compliance**1. Resource implications (including staffing)**

No resource implications are associated with the paper which provides an update on activity.

2. Risk assessment

The paper is for information only and no risk assessment is included.

3. Equality and Diversity

The paper is for information on progress with current activity. Equality and diversity implications will be considered as part of work on individual priorities.

4. Freedom of information

The paper is **open**.

Originator of the paper

Susan Hunter, Academic Services

20 March 2018

Senate Committee Planning 2018-19

Executive Summary

In Semester One 2017 the Committee had an opportunity to identify:

- Student experience, learning and teaching issues that Schools / Colleges / support groups should take account of in the planning round; and
- Major institutional projects that the Committee would like to make a case for, which would require significant support from support services which could not be accommodated within existing resources.

The Committee is now being invited to identify its full set of priorities for the coming session. The Committee is asked to note that further priorities may emerge from the consideration of planning round submissions.

How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?

Aligns with University Strategic Objective of Leadership in Learning, and with the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy.

Action requested

The Committee is now being invited to identify its priorities for the coming session.

How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?

Academic Services will submit the plans to Senate on 30 May 2018, and will communicate them more widely using the Senate Committees' Newsletter. College representatives on the Committee are encouraged to discuss the plans with their Schools.

Resource / Risk / Compliance

1. Resource implications (including staffing)

Yes. The paper will assist the University to use its resources strategically. Any priorities identified by the Committee must be possible to implement within existing resources, since it is too late in the planning round for 2018-19 to make a case for new projects.

2. Risk assessment

No. Since the paper aims to generate ideas rather than to recommend a specific course of action, it is not necessary to undertake a risk analysis.

3. Equality and Diversity

No. Since the paper aims to generate ideas rather than to recommend a specific course of action, it is not necessary to undertake an equality and diversity assessment.

4. Freedom of information

For inclusion in open business

Senate Committee Planning 2018-19

1 Background - 2017-18 plans

At its meeting on 31 March 2017, Senate endorsed the Senate Committees' plans for 2017-1, see Paper E at:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/20170531agendaandpapers.pdf>

2 Approach to 2018-19 planning cycle

The Senate Committees' input into the current planning involves the following:

- At their meetings in Semester One, the Senate Committees identified student experience, learning and teaching issues that Schools / Colleges / support groups should take account of in the planning round. This informed the Senior Vice-Principal's input into Governance and Strategic Planning's initial guidance to Schools / Colleges / support groups regarding priorities for the planning round. See attached Annex A.
- At their meetings in Semester One, the Senate Committees also had an opportunity to identify major institutional projects that they would like to make a case for, which would require significant support from support services which could not be accommodated within existing resources.
- In Semester Two, the Committees will identify their own priorities for the coming session – and will submit their plans to the 30 May 2018 Senate meeting for approval. This stage of the planning process will be considered at this meeting.

3 Reference points for identifying priorities for 2018-19

3.1 *Task groups and projects that will continue into 2018-19*

Some Senate Committee task groups / projects already underway will continue into 2018-19. These activities are the baseline for planning for 2018-19.

3.2 Learning and Teaching Strategy

The Senate Learning and Teaching Committee has agreed which aspects of the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy should be prioritised in 2018-19, see Paper H:

www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/20171115agendapapers.pdf

The Learning and Teaching Policy Group has developed a detailed implementation plan for each of these priority areas, including some actions involving action from the Senate Committees.

3.3 Student Partnership Agreement

On 4 October 2018, Senate approved the University's first Student Partnership Agreement (SPA). The Senate Learning and Teaching Committee will be considering an implementation plan for the SPA at its meeting on 14 March 2018.

3.4 Themes from Colleges' annual quality reports

In their 2018 Annual Quality Reports (on 2016-17) the Colleges have highlighted some general themes for annual planning, which the Committee should take account of when identifying priorities for the coming session. See Annex C.

4 For discussion – identifying priorities

Annex B sets out a range of proposed priorities for the Senate Committees for 2018-19, taking account of the reference points set out in section 3. **The Committee is invited to confirm whether it is content with these priorities, and to identify any other potential priorities for the coming session.** When identifying any additional priorities, the Committee should set out a clear rationale and reflect on the resource requirements involved (taking account of the point regarding capacity and headroom – see 5 below). The Senior Vice-Principal will then liaise with the Director of Academic Services, and with the Conveners of the Senate Committee, to agree a final set of priorities to present to Senate in May 2018 for approval.

5 Capacity and headroom

In order to take forward their projects, the Senate Committees rely on the capacity of Schools, Colleges and EUSA to engage, and on professional support from Academic Services, Student Systems, Information Services Group, the Institute for Academic Development and the Careers Service / Employability Consultancy. These resources will enable all the Senate Committees to undertake a reasonable volume of projects activities. Any priorities identified by the Committee must be possible to implement within existing resources, since it is too late to take account of them during the planning round for 2018-19. In addition, it is necessary to retain sufficient headroom to address high priority issues that emerge (for example as a result of external developments) during the session.

The proposed priorities set out in Annex B represents a significant body of work, and it is unlikely that capacity is available to deliver many additional priorities. Given this, and that that the Senate Committees will need to be in a position to respond to any new priorities highlighted by the new Principal in 2018-19 (as well as to engage with any policy issues highlighted by the Student Administration and Support strand of the Service Excellence Programme), the Committees are encouraged not to add many new priorities at this stage.

Annex A: Senior Vice-Principal's initial thematic input into 2017-18 planning round guidance

- Enhancing the sense of shared community linking academic staff and students, and developing more effective ways of listening and responding to students' views;
- Enhancing the academic and pastoral support we give to students;
- Developing new and innovative approaches to online learning that can provide an excellent student experience to large numbers of students;
- Enhancing the development of employability skills through the curriculum;
- Developing high quality learning, teaching and social spaces for taught and research students.

Annex B – Initial proposals for Senate Committee priorities for 2018-19

The following includes:

- Senate Committee projects and related activities already underway which are likely to continue into 2018-19
- Proposed activities associated with the implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy
- Other activities proposed or scheduled for 2018-19 (including scheduled reviews of policies)

Senate Learning and Teaching Committee

- Oversee implementation of University Learning and Teaching Strategy
- Implement new institutional policy to support the University's Lecture Recording service
- Develop an institutional vision for Digital Education (the 'Near Future Teaching' programme)
- Distance Learning at Scale project – contribute to learning, teaching and student experience dimensions
- Oversee and guide work to support students' Careers, Employability and Graduate Attributes
- Monitor implementation of the Student Mental Health Strategy
- Oversee and guide the implementation of recommendations from the task group on research-led learning and teaching
- Assessment and Feedback - strands of work regarding the Leading Enhancement in Feedback and Assessment (LEAF) project, and the role of curriculum design in facilitating quality assessment and feedback models
- Strengthen the University's understanding of retention and continuation rates for different student groups

Researcher Experience Committee

- Excellence in Doctoral Training and Career Development programme -
 - Supervisor training and support strand
 - Mentorship and wellbeing
- Oversee the introduction of the Enlightenment Scholarships scheme
- Evaluate the implementation of the new Policy for the Recruitment, Support and Development of Tutors and Demonstrators
- Enhance support for Early Career Researchers (make more visible, enhance and structure provision, strengthen partnerships)

Senate Curriculum and Student Progression Committee

- Complete the Assessment and Progression Tools project
- Work with the Service Excellence Programme to oversee the implementation of any significant policy changes associated with the Study Away and Special Circumstances, Extensions and Concessions strands
- Review policy regarding resubmission of PGT dissertations and associated dissertation supervision support, and PGT assessment/progression arrangements (complete any elements outstanding from 2017-18 and oversee introduction of any changes in policy)
- Review the Code of Student Conduct
- Review the Support for Study Policy
- Strengthen support for course and programme design and development – consolidate the existing policy and guidance into a single University suite of documents, and roll-out training and support for Boards of Studies conveners and administrators

Senate Quality Assurance Committee

- Work with the Students' Association to enhance the Class Representation System
- Oversee and evaluate the effectiveness of the Personal Tutor system
- Oversee institutional activities in response to 2015 Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR)
- Oversee initial preparations for the University's next ELIR

- Embed mid-course feedback for undergraduate students, and develop appropriate mechanisms for evaluating its operation
- Thematic review of student support services (topic to be confirmed)

Other relevant projects

- Work with Students' Association to promote and implement the Student Partnership Agreement
- Implement the changes in Senate's composition associated with the HE Governance (Scotland) Act 2016
- Student Administration and Support strand of Service Excellence Programme – likely to raise various new strands of activity for Senate Committees, for example regarding academic policy and regulations
- Engage with further development of Teaching Excellence Framework
- Policies and Codes – Ongoing programme of review of policies

Annex C – main themes for forward planning identified in College Annual Quality Reports

- **Learning and teaching spaces** – address ongoing challenges regarding the availability of high quality teaching space and social spaces for students, particularly in regard to the impact that lack of space has on further development of innovative learning and teaching strategies. In addition, address issues associated with current development work eg the impact of noise. (Referring to Space Strategy Group, and the Timetabling and Modelling team)
- **Student systems and data issues** - support for: further development of the Student Data Dashboard, particularly in regard to PGR data; training and guidance for Schools to help utilise the data effectively; and addressing discrepancies between centrally held Dashboard data and local School data. (Referring to Director of Student Systems)
- **Course Enhancement Questionnaires (CEQs)** - addressing low response rates and the impact this has on school confidence in the accuracy of the results. (Referring to Director of Student Systems)
- **Personal Tutor system** - Opportunities remain to enhance the system, eg opportunities for greater clarity and guidance in regard to support available to Personal Tutors and Student Support Teams and for more opportunities to share practice. (Referred to Assistant Principal Academic Support)

REC: 20.04.18

H/02/26/02

REC 17/18 4G

The University of Edinburgh

Senatus Researcher Experience Committee

20 April 2018

Service Excellence, Student Administration & Support Update

Executive Summary

Dated 22nd February 2018, this paper provides a brief update of the work being undertaken by the Student Administration & Support strand of the Service Excellence Programme, as part of a commitment to ensure that the Senate Committees are appraised of progress across each of these projects.

How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?

The Service Excellence Programme has been identified as a strategic priority.

Action requested

To note (no requested action at this stage).

How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?

Future Service Excellence Programme recommendations will be communicated by the Board through existing committee structures. Future SA&S project proposals will be routed through Researcher Experience Committee, Learning & Teaching Committee, Quality Assurance Committee or Curriculum & Student Progression Committee as necessary.

Resource / Risk / Compliance

1. Resource implications (including staffing)

N/A at this stage.

2. Risk assessment

SA&S aren't identifying risks for consideration at this stage.

3. Equality and Diversity

N/A at this stage.

4. Freedom of information

Open

Key words

Service Excellence Programme / Student Administration & Support / Special Circumstances

Originator of the paper

Neil McGillivray

Student Administration & Support Programme Lead

22nd February 2018

MAR 2018: UPDATE ON SERVICE EXCELLENCE (STUDENT ADMINISTRATION & SUPPORT)

The Student Administration & Support (SA&S) Programme's proposed programme of work (emerging from previous CSA and OBC phases) has been endorsed by the Service Excellence (SEP) Board.

The SA&S Board last met on 20th November 2017. That meeting endorsed the work of the following projects, asking the SA&S team to return with fully developed business case and blueprint documentation:

- Special Circumstances, Coursework Extensions and Concessions
- Working & Study Away
- Student Immigration Service

Members of the SA&S team attended the 25th January CPSC meeting to highlight emerging policy recommendations, in advance of the completion of the final SA&S Board proposals. This meeting provided thorough feedback on the Special Circumstances proposal, particularly focussing on:

- the feasibility of administering the volume of SC cases at peak periods, if located at College level.
- the necessary role of academic colleagues in decision SC making, and the complexity of the interface between SCC and BoE meetings.

Following CPSC, and a series of recent consultation and feedback sessions (including academic colleagues from all three Colleges, the Students' Association and The Advice Place), the Special Circumstances proposal is being revised to include:

- professional services validation of Special Circumstances submissions; limited to the checking of dates, documentation and assessing severity of impact.
- the expectation that academic staff will be responsible for all Special Circumstances decision making, routinely as part of the Board of Examiners meeting.

In order to provide time to complete blueprint and final business cases for Working & Study Away and Student Immigration, whilst also making sure that we allowed for sufficient time to respond to the Special Circumstances feedback, the order of SA&S Board meetings has been adjusted to:

9th March 2018

- Working & Study Away
- Student Immigration Service

10th April 2018

- Special Circumstances, Coursework Extension and Concessions
- Course Timetabling

SA&S testing of an Office 365 Examination Timetabling solution continues, with progress meetings planned for March and April 2018.

Work has begun on the scoping of the Programme and Course Information Management work, working closely with colleagues in the Student Recruitment & Admissions programme, Academic Services and Internal Audit.

The development of a Target Operating Model continues and will be considered at the 28th February SEP Board, and likely the 9th March SA&S Board. Once approved, scoping of the final detailed design phase of the programme will begin - ready for the next series of workshops in early 2018/19.

More detail is available on the SA&S wiki:

<https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=346121562>

REC: 20.04.18

H/02/26/02

REC 17/18 4I

The University of Edinburgh

Senate Researcher Experience Committee

20 April 2018

Report from the Knowledge Strategy Committee

Executive Summary

To update Senate on certain matters considered by the Knowledge Strategy Committee at its meeting on 19 January 2018.

How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?

Not applicable.

Action requested

Senate is invited to note the report.

How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?

Not applicable.

Resource / Risk / Compliance

1. Resource implications (including staffing)

Where applicable, as covered in the report.

2. Risk assessment

Where applicable, as covered in the report.

3. Equality and Diversity

Where applicable, as covered in the report.

4. Freedom of information

This paper is open.

Key words

Knowledge Strategy Committee

Originator of the paper

Dr Lewis Allan, Head of Court Services, February 2018

REPORT FROM THE KNOWLEDGE STRATEGY COMMITTEE**19 January 2018****1 Information Services Planning: Strategic Programmes**

The Chief Information Officer presented the emerging key components for the Information Services Group's annual planning round submission. The proposed strategic programmes are: Learning, Teaching and Student Experience; Digital Research Services; Core Systems Strategy; Digital Transformation; Information Security; and, Library: National and International Leadership. The following points were raised in discussion:

- Important to prioritise while recognising challenges in doing so;
- Assess the appropriate level of information security standards required for different areas of the University;
- Sub-divide the student experience programme into projects intended to benefit current students and future students;
- A project planning unit is assessing likely staffing requirements to deliver the programmes;
- Moving towards an integrated model for planning and improving references to the University's strategic objectives in the submission.

2 Information Services Capital Envelope

A review of the capital expenditure for 2016/17 and a forecast of capital expenditure for the period 2017/18 to 2025/26 was reviewed. It was noted that new equipment for automated library lending may be required, with the Committee to be kept updated.

3 Core Systems Strategy – Procurement Update

Stages for the Core Systems (Phase 1) procurement project and associated governance engagement plan and timeline were reviewed. The intent to prioritise the replacement of the HR, Finance, Payroll and Procurement management systems with a single vendor Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) solution was noted. Approval for the procurement award will be sought from Court, with delegated authority requested for the detailed competitive dialogue phase prior to the issue of the Invitation to Submit Final Tender.

The Committee noted the procurement timeline summary, approved the procurement governance engagement plan and timeline and noted the intention to seek delegated authority for budget approval.

4 Lecture Capture Consultation

The Assistant Principal Online Learning summarised the draft Lecture Recording Policy, currently the subject of an open consultation. Noting the intent for the new policy to come into effect for the 2018/19 session, coinciding with an integration of the lecture recording service with the timetabling system and an expansion of the service provision to cover nearly 300 rooms, members made the following points:

- The proposed move from an 'opt-in' to an 'opt-out' system, with Head of School agreement required for an 'opt-out' was welcomed;
- Lecture recording can reduce the likelihood of lectures over-running, assisting students who have successive lectures scheduled;
- Longer term, lecture recording could assist in improving lecture quality;
- The proposed policy and large-scale implementation can place the University as a leader in the field.

5 Library Materials

The Head of Library Academic Support outlined a business case for an uplift to the Library materials budget to be considered within the annual planning round. Members discussed the above inflation price increases set by publishers offering journals on a 'bundled' basis, increasing student demand for library materials, taking a University-wide approach to the Library budget including managing currency fluctuations, incorporating philanthropic support into the business case and setting the business case in the context of the University's Strategic Plan.

6 Library Committee Governance

Following Court's agreement in principle in June 2017 to revoke two outdated Ordinances governing the Library Committee and their replacement by a new Resolution, a new draft Resolution and Terms of Reference for the Library Committee were considered. Noting the intent for the draft Resolution to contain general principles and for the Terms of Reference to contain specific details on the operation of the Library Committee, the draft Resolution was endorsed and the Terms of Reference approved.

7 Distance Learning at Scale

An update on the Distance Learning at Scale programme was reviewed. The Committee discussed work underway to develop governance and quality assurance structures, the size and scope of existing distance learning courses, and the use of student support services by distance learning students compared with on-campus students.