



Queen Margaret University
EDINBURGH

DOCTORAL PROGRAMME CODE OF PRACTICE

2017

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Key Contacts

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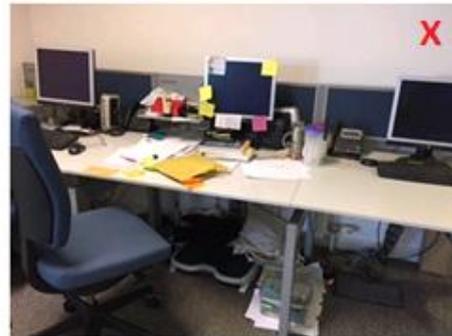
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Section I - Facilities and support

This section covers practical aspects of what will be provided for research students in terms of facilities and support services. It also covers various financial matters.

1 School-based Facilities

- 1.1 Every doctoral student is a member of one of the University's Schools; either the School of Health Science or the School of Arts, Social Science and Management. Doctoral students are also members of the Graduate School.
- 1.2 The Graduate School will provide the facilities listed below as the minimum standard arrangements for each full time doctoral student:
 - Desk space
 - Access to lockable storage
 - Access to computer network and essential software
 - Electronic mail address
 - Facilities for receiving paper mail
 - Access to photocopier / printer
 - Access to telephone
- 1.3 Full time students are expected to be present and studying on campus approx. 3 days each week and as such, full-time students will normally have their own dedicated desk and computer terminal for the duration of their prescribed studies.
- 1.4 If a student extends their programme into their continuation period every effort will be made to allow the student to remain at their desk until thesis is submitted, although this is not guaranteed and will be dependent on desk availability.
- 1.5 If full time students are not using their desks at full capacity (i.e. at least 3 days per week) and desks are being left frequently vacant, students will be required to vacate the desk and use the flexible doctoral hot desks as and when required.
- 1.6 Full time candidates who are absent from campus for periods of >3 weeks should clear their desk of belongings so that the desk can be temporarily used as a hot desk by other students during their period of absence.
- 1.7 Part-time doctoral students are not allocated dedicated desk space and are required to make use of the hot desk facilities in the staff side of the academic building or use the postgraduate computer room in the library.
- 1.8 Following submission of thesis students will be required to vacate storage locker(s) within four weeks. Students should ensure that any confidential data / information is moved into alternative appropriate storage.
- 1.9 Desk space should be kept clean, tidy and organised at all times so as not to negatively impact on neighbouring colleagues.



2 Regulations, Policies and Code of Conduct

- 2.1 Your attention is drawn to QMU's regulations, policies and codes of conduct. It is your responsibility to ensure you have an understanding of how the University's regulations, policies, codes of conduct and associated documents affect you.
- 2.2 These regulations, policies and codes of conduct are put in place to ensure everyone knows what they should and should not do, what is acceptable and what is not acceptable within QMU. You need to make yourself familiar with what areas are covered. You may need to refer to these during your time at QMU.
- 2.3 The doctoral regulations that cover your research programme are available on the Graduate School website. It is strongly recommended that all doctoral students read the regulations that govern their degree.

PhD Regulations (2015) [here](#)

Professional Doctorate Regulations (2016) [here](#)

3 Smartcards and staff/student status

- 3.1 Doctoral students are regarded primarily as students but have most of the privileges of staff. Students on a bursary contract are required to teach, while non-bursary students may become involved in teaching at a later stage. The University encourages doctoral students to participate as fully as possible in the intellectual culture of the organisation and to interact with a range of staff.
- 3.2 Doctoral students will receive both staff and student smartcards. They will be allowed full access to the staff office accommodation. As required, they will be allowed access to specialist laboratory or clinical areas.
- 3.3 In addition, the student card allows the student to demonstrate student status. Students are members of the Students' Union and are welcome to join student societies. All students are automatically members of the Doctoral Students Association (DSA), which is run by doctoral students for doctoral students.
- 3.4 It is the responsibility of the Graduate School to forward details of new students to Registry and Human Resources to allow student and staff cards to be prepared.
- 3.5 It is the responsibility of the Graduate School to request extensions to staff access accounts if and when required.
- 3.6 Smartcards must be worn visibly at all times on campus as this is your formal identification. If smartcards are lost, a charge will be made to replace them.

4 IT and Library services

- 4.1 Doctoral students will have a staff account created for them which allows access to IT and library services on the same terms as staff. This includes library borrowing rights, Intranet access and the ability to print free of charge. This will also allow remote access to the staff desktop.
- 4.2 It is the responsibility of the Graduate School to forward details of new students to Information Services in order to start the process of creating the relevant accounts. New students will be informed of their IT usernames and default passwords.
- 4.3 Students are to seek guidance on IT services and programmes directly from Information Services via a request to Assist@qmu.ac.uk
- 4.4 Common specialist software required for the research project will be made available as licence agreements permit. The full list of software supported by Information Services is reviewed regularly. Highly specialist software for which demand is limited may need to be sourced by the student. Students are advised to contact Assist@qmu.ac.uk for advice from IS on software which can and cannot be supported in the Thin Client environment and alternative options that may be available to them.
- 4.5 The Research Support Librarian is available to doctoral students for assistance and training in using library resources. Students are to seek assistance for library resources directly from Library Services. <http://libguides.qmu.ac.uk/researchsupport>

5 Matriculation

- 5.1 Students must matriculate every September. This includes students who have been examined but are working on amendments. Matriculation is important to ensure students are still active and that their records are up to date.
- 5.2 By matriculating, you are confirming that you agree to the University's regulations, policies and codes of conduct. It is very important that you matriculate and if you do not, you will be unable to access any of the University resources.
- 5.3 Failure to matriculate may result in deregistration from your doctoral programme.
- 5.4 Guidance and instructions for online matriculation is available on the QMU Registry website. Students are to seek matriculation assistance directly from Registry (Registry@qmu.ac.uk) if required.
- 5.5 Students must be fully matriculated in order to graduate.

6 Fees

- 6.1 Full details regarding the payment and amount of fees, applicable for a particular session, can be found in the "Fees and Charges" section of the QMU Registry website.
- 6.2 Fee levels are reviewed on an annual basis, and may be subject to increase during the period of study. It is therefore possible that by the time a doctoral student reaches their continuation or examination stage, the continuation or examination fee may have increased since initial matriculation.

- 6.3 There are four categories of doctoral student in relation to fees: Fee-paying (or self funding), Fee-paying (or self funding) with support from an independent sponsor, Studentship and Staff.

Fee-paying and Fee-paying with support

Fee-paying doctoral students (both categories) pay tuition fees annually for the prescribed period of study, plus any continuation fee, and the examination fee. If an independent sponsor has agreed to support your study (e.g. an employer, a government or other funding body) arrangements can be made to invoice the sponsor directly.

It is a condition of registration that students accept liability for their fees. Even if the fees are to be paid by a sponsor such as an embassy or employer, it is the student's personal responsibility to ensure that they are paid and to provide evidence of funding at matriculation.

Where any student has failed to provide written confirmation of funding within 28 days of the start of their programme of study, he or she will be deemed to be personally liable for the payment of the fees, and an invoice will be issued to the student accordingly.

Research which requires the use of laboratory facilities or significant resources may be subject to a 'bench fee'. This must be agreed in consultation with the Dean of School prior to a formal offer of study being made.

Studentship

Research students on a Studentship have their tuition and bench fees waived, but are liable for any continuation fee and for the examination fee.

Staff

Fees may be waived for current members of academic staff registered for a part-time doctoral degree. Staff fee waivers are approved at the discretion of the Dean of Schools. If a member of staff ceases to be a member of staff during their programme period, the student is personally liable for the payment of all fees for the remaining programme period.

- 6.4 If you anticipate any financial difficulty please contact our Finance Office immediately via our University telephone number (0131) 474 0000 or alternatively you may prefer to speak to one of the staff in Student Services who can also be contacted by calling (0131) 474 0000 and requesting to speak to the Student Funding Adviser, via Finance.

7 Complaints Procedures

- 7.1 The University has established procedures for the making and hearing of complaints and grievances. Students are encouraged to seek resolution of such matters informally first, if at all possible, with the Head of Graduate School and, if appropriate, their Dean of School.
- 7.2 The complaints procedure document is available on the QMU GQE website and Staff in the Division of Governance & Quality Enhancement can also offer advice.

8 Equal Opportunities

- 8.1 Queen Margaret University is committed to equality of opportunity and believes in a culture of diversity and inclusion. Each application received by the University is considered carefully on its own merits. The University seeks to open access to a wide range of students, subject to the essential principle that there is a reasonable expectation of completion within the normal duration of registration.

QMU Equal Opportunities Webpages <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/about-the-university/equality-and-diversity/>

9 Students with Disabilities

- 9.1 Information for students with disabilities, including contact details for the Student Disability Advisor, is given in the *Student Handbook and Diary*. It is recommended that a student makes contact with the Academic Disabled Students Co-ordinator for their academic department as early in their programme of study as possible.

10 International Students

- 10.1 Support for international students is supplied by the International Office.
- 10.2 Overseas students will not be eligible for a student visa unless they are registered full-time. The University has certain responsibilities under law as a sponsor of visa applications. This may require us to pass on information to the UKVI should a student drop out of contact with his or her supervisors and / or fail to comply with the University's attendance monitoring procedures.

11 Quality Assurance

- 11.1 The University monitors the operation of doctoral degrees through:
- An annual report to the Graduate School Academic Board
 - Monthly supervision reports
 - Progression / assessment reports
 - Student surveys (e.g. PRES)
 - Regular meetings with the Doctoral Student Association (DSA)
 - Student representation on the Graduate School Academic Board, when invited.
 - Focus groups, when appropriate.

12 Bursary contract

- 12.1 The amount of the bursary per annum is as stated at the time of award. It is paid through Finance directly to the student in monthly instalments, throughout the prescribed period. The bursary is not regarded as income for tax purposes. Similarly, the University will not make any National Insurance contributions.
- 12.2 Full time students will receive 36 monthly bursary payments. Part time students receive 50% of the monthly bursary for 72 months. Payments continue subject to satisfactory attendance, progression and engagement with the PhD programme.
- 12.3 The University will waive tuition and bench fees for bursary holders. However, bursary holders will be liable for any continuation fee and for the examination fee in common with all other research students. The rate of the continuation or examination fee due is the fee set for the session in which it is due.

- 12.4 A research budget will also be set up for each bursary holder. A student should not expect any further financial assistance from QMU in support of their period of study.
- 12.5 All research students will also be responsible for the costs of production of all copies of the thesis, including the costs of binding.
- 12.6 Bursary students may be asked to undertake School duties as follows:

Full time students	
Study year	Hours of work
Yr 1 / Sem 1	First year students will not be asked to work in their first semester of studies
Yr 1 / Sem 2	90 hours
Year 2 / Sem 1	180 hours total, which may be split variably over semesters depending on the module reaching requirements
Year 2 / Sem 2	
Year 3 / Sem 1	90 hours
Year 3 / Sem 2	Third year students will not be asked to work in the second semester so they can concentrate on thesis submission.

Part time students	
Study year	Hours of work
Yr 1	Part time students will not be asked to work in their first year of studies
Yr 2	45 hours of work
Year 3	90 hours total, which may be split variably over semesters depending on the module reaching requirements
Year 4	90 hours total, which may be split variably over semesters depending on the module reaching requirements
Year 5	45 hours of work
Year 6	Final year students will not be asked to work so they can concentrate on thesis submission.

- 12.7 The exact nature of the duties should be decided by the Head of Subject / Dean of School in consultation with the student and the Supervisory Team. Duties should normally reflect the student's expertise and will be academic in nature. Wherever possible, duties should be linked to the student's career development. The Dean of School will be responsible for monitoring the quality of the student's work and providing feedback on performance. In some Schools this task will be delegated to an Associate Dean or Head of Subject.
- 12.8 Where teaching is undertaken, an allowance should be made for preparation time where relevant. The amount of preparation time will vary depending on the nature of the teaching and should be agreed between the Head of Subject, the Supervisory Team and the student. It is suggested that approximately half an hour of preparation time should be included for every hour of contact time, unless the student is following a pre-set lesson plan.
- 12.9 Any students undertaking teaching must attend the short course in learning, teaching and assessment organised by the Centre for Academic Practice. This will be regarded as skills development and will not count as part of the School duties.
- 12.10 A record of hours worked must be kept by the student in order to monitor their working hours completed. Students are encouraged to challenge their teaching

responsibilities requested by their School if the contractual hours have already been met and further work may be detrimental to their research progress.

- 12.11 Schools may ask students to undertake duties in addition to these hours, however, additional work should be agreed by both the student and the Supervision Team and paid at the normal rate. Any additional work not covered by the bursary will be subject to tax and national insurance contributions.
- 12.12 Schools should not encourage students to work more hours than is compatible with their PhD research. Full-time students are expected to set aside the equivalent of 35 hours a week for their project. It is suggested that full-time students should undertake no more than 12 hours a week of School duties and paid work on top of their PhD.
- 12.13 Full details of the bursary contract will be sent to students along with the formal offer letter.

13 Employment and non-bursary students

- 13.1 Other research students may be offered paid work by the University from time to time, if available. The University recognises that students may need to enter employment for a number of reasons.
- 13.2 The hours described in the previous paragraph are an indication of what is likely to be manageable by a student registered for a full/part time research degree.
- 13.3 It is good practice for all students, including those registered on a part-time basis, to discuss their level of commitment to paid employment with the supervisory team.
- 13.4 Students on a tier 4 visa must not work more than a total of 20 hours a week. This restriction is applicable for the full calendar year as doctoral programmes run continuously from Sept-August.

14 Other financial support

- 14.1 The University has no obligation to support students with other expenses, such as travel expenses or the costs of conference attendance. Students may apply to the Dean of School for support or may apply to such funds and awards as are advertised from time to time. However, students are encouraged to seek external means of funding where appropriate. Supervision teams should write letters of support as required.

Section II – Good research practice

The University is ultimately responsible for the good research conduct of all students carrying out research as part of a programme of study. If a student researcher causes harm or embarrassment to a participant, breaches confidentiality or is perceived to have demonstrated poor conduct in some other way, it is the University which will be held liable. For this reason, the University requires to have rigorous ethical approval procedures.

This section expands on what is meant by good research conduct in relation to a number of areas. As well as ethics, student researchers should be aware of confidentiality and data protection issues; intellectual property rights; plagiarism and academic misconduct; and health and safety.

Advice is also given on dealing with collaborative research and externally funded research.

1 Ethics

1.1 Formal ethical approval is required for ALL research conducted by QMU students. It is vital that students and supervisors read the University's guidance on "[Research Ethics: Regulations, Procedures and Guidelines](#)", which explains how to make an application for ethical approval for a research project.

- QMU Ethics webpage [here](#)

1.2 Most research projects can be approved at Head of Subject level. The application only needs to be referred to the Research Ethics Committee if (a) it involves vulnerable people; (b) it has the potential to cause pain or emotional distress; or (c) there are non-standard considerations of confidentiality. Depending on the nature of the research, ethical approval may require to be sought from another external body. Research involving the use of NHS patients, NHS staff or NHS data must be approved by the relevant NHS committee.

- NHS research support webpage [here](#)
- NHS Lothian Research Ethics webpage [here](#)

1.3 Students commonly report that it takes longer to secure ethical approval than they had anticipated, especially when applying to an external ethics committee. It therefore makes sense to submit paperwork as early as possible. This means thinking closely about the process for collecting data. The person or committee granting approval will need to know exactly what participants will be asked to do, what information they will receive and what safeguards will be in place in the event of problems.

1.4 Permission may be needed to access certain groups of participants (e.g. from a school or education authority, or an employer).

1.5 If your research protocol changes following initial ethical approval you will need to report this to whoever granted the approval. If the change is significant it may be necessary to complete a fresh application.

2 Confidentiality and Data Protection

2.1 It is essential that researchers take measures to ensure the confidentiality of all personal data relating to participants. This includes names and addresses as well as

research data. Wherever possible steps should be taken to anonymise participants. The Research Ethics guidelines contain useful advice on how to approach this.

- 2.2 As part of the process of informed consent participants should be informed about the extent to which their data will be seen by others and the measures taken to maintain confidentiality.
- 2.3 Researchers must familiarise themselves with the key provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Personal data **must**:

- Be obtained and processed fairly and lawfully and shall not be processed unless certain conditions are met.
- Be obtained for a specified and lawful purpose and shall not be processed in any manner incompatible with that purpose.
- Be adequate, relevant and not excessive for those purposes.
- Be accurate and kept up to date.
- Not be kept for longer than is necessary for that purpose.
- Be processed in accordance with the data subject's rights.
- Be kept secure from unauthorised access, accidental loss or destruction.
- Not be transferred to a country outside the European Economic Area, unless that country has equivalent levels of protection for personal data.

Personal data is information about a living individual, who is identifiable from that information or who could be identified from that information combined with other data which the University either holds or is likely to obtain.

The University and all its staff and students who process or use personal information must ensure that they follow these Data Protection Principles at all times.

- 2.4 Researchers must ensure all data is kept securely (ideally in a locked filing cabinet or drawer). This applies whether data is held at the University or at home (but it is preferable that data should be stored in the University). Raw research data needs to be stored for a reasonable period of time so that it can be re-accessed and checked should issues or queries arise (for example from conflicting findings by other research teams). The QMU Retention Policy is that raw data, including interview tapes, completed questionnaires, and other material, generally should be retained for five years after the research programme is completed, although this can vary depending on funder and other requirements.
- 2.5 Additionally, signed consent forms should be kept separately from the data for 12 months on campus and thereafter in remote secure storage for the duration of the retention of the physical data. This protects researchers in case any problem arises with a participant.

Resources relating to Freedom of Information and data management can be accessed via the QMU webpage <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/footer/foi-and-data-protection/>

3 Intellectual Property Rights

- 3.1 Intellectual Property is an asset that may have commercial value. The University has a responsibility to ensure that it is managed effectively and wishes to encourage the

promotion, protection and commercial exploitation of Intellectual Property created or developed by staff and/or students whether or not in collaboration with external organisations, to the mutual benefit of the inventors, the University and (if any) external collaborating organisations.

- 3.2 It is the University's policy that the product of work conducted with the benefit of the University environment (which includes facilities, resources, expertise and intellectual assets) constitutes intellectual property that should be owned, protected and used by the University for the general good of the whole University community.
- 3.3 The University should not infringe the rights of others who own and control Intellectual Property.
- 3.4 The University should meet its obligations to the funders of research including where required the management and exploitation of the results of the research.
- 3.5 All intellectual property created by a student whilst undertaking a research degree is assigned to and owned by the University, together with an unlimited licence for the University to use any background intellectual property which a research student may own and which becomes incorporated in the intellectual property arising from the activity.
- 3.6 Students may publish the results of their research during or after their research degree programme. There is no restriction on publication, unless any commercial interests are involved.
- 3.7 Students are expected to consult with the supervisory team regarding attribution of authorship on publications. Authorship conventions vary in different subject areas, but it is normal to list supervisors as co-authors.
- 3.8 Students are expected to gain supervisors permission before they are named on research papers primarily authored by students and before students submit draft papers to journals for consideration.
- 3.9 Students are encouraged to present papers for publication and to present at conferences when possible. However, it is important to consult the supervisory team about such activities. A balance must be struck between the desire to publish and the need to complete the thesis in good time.
- 3.10 Research students will be asked to disclose any relevant Intellectual Property which they or their employer (if relevant) owns to enable their supervisor to determine whether an assignment or licence agreement is needed. This prevents any risk of infringing a third party's rights.
- 3.11 In most cases, students will need to consider Intellectual Property only in terms of good scholarly practice and the avoidance of presenting the ideas of another person as their own. However, greater care needs to be taken when there is a possibility of commercial exploitation. In such cases, students and their supervisors should contact the Strategic Planning and Research Support Unit for advice at an early stage.
- 3.12 Students are required to provide a copy of their thesis for storage in the University library before they may graduate. If (for reasons of participant confidentiality or protection of commercial interests) the student feels it desirable to restrict

publication, this would need to be discussed and approved by the Research Ethics Committee.

- 3.13 Copyright on the thesis itself remains the property of the student.
- 3.14 After leaving the University, students must continue to acknowledge and attribute the University's intellectual property rights created during the period of their employment or other contractual obligation at the University in a clear manner and to avoid misleading future employers or collaborators or other material third parties as to the interests in the Intellectual Property concerned.
- 3.15 It is important that students acknowledge any contribution other people may have made to the thesis, including technical and statistical support or proof reading.

Intellectual Property policy is available on the Governance and Quality Enhancement website [here](#)

4 Plagiarism and academic misconduct

- 4.1 The University's Code of Practice on Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism is set out in the Student Handbook. Plagiarism, collusion, falsification of data and other forms of academic dishonesty are considered fraudulent and an offence against University discipline. Whilst the principles described in the Student Handbook apply to all students, the procedures for reporting and evaluation for a suspected offence differ slightly in the case of research students.
- 4.2 Research degrees differ from taught degrees in that much of the student's work is not assessed formally. A high standard of referencing is expected from all research degree students and supervision teams should seek to correct any examples of poor academic practice found in students' written work. If a supervision team has concerns about possible plagiarism in work submitted he/she should follow the steps set out in 4.4 below.
- 4.3 Where academic misconduct is suspected in formal assessed work, the assessors should first discuss the concerns with the students' supervision team. Serious cases should be referred to the Graduate School in the first instance. The University Secretary will then decide if the case is to be heard summarily by the Dean of School or by the Disciplinary Committee, in accordance with the QMU Code of Discipline.
- 4.4 The supervision team shall decide whether there is a prima facie case established for plagiarism and, on that basis, the appropriate route for handling the case. If it is judged that there is academic misbehaviour or academic misconduct, then the case will be referred to the Graduate School in the first instance. The supervision team will be responsible for the submission of evidential material to the Graduate School.
- 4.5 Following referral to the Graduate School, the University Secretary will review the evidence and decide if the case is to be heard summarily by the Dean of School or by the Disciplinary Committee, in accordance with the QMU Code of Discipline.
- 4.6 The supervisors are responsible for informing the student(s) involved and any referring staff member of the decision to move to the Disciplinary process.
- 4.7 Such offences on the part of academic staff would be dealt with by disciplinary procedures described in the QMU Code of Discipline.

- 4.8 Researchers are expected to act with integrity in respect of their data. Findings which do not support the research hypothesis must be reported as well as those which do. In extreme cases, doubts may arise about the veracity of data. It is essential for the University's reputation that supervisors report any concerns of this nature to the Secretary to the Graduate School Academic Board.

Disciplinary Regulations [here](#)

Plagiarism – a guide for academic staff [here](#)

5 Health and Safety

- 5.1 Health and Safety information is given in the Student Handbook. It is extremely important that students observe the University Health and Safety policy and any health and safety precautions which may be prescribed. It is also important that students are sensitive to issues of risk in the Health and Safety context.
- 5.2 Students working in laboratory or clinical areas must take particular care to familiarise themselves with the safety procedures for that environment. In most cases, specific guidance will be available from technicians.

Health and Safety Policy [here](#)

Health and Safety Intranet Site [here](#)

6 External collaborators

- 6.1 The University shall encourage co-operation with relevant establishments and organisations (Collaborating Establishments) for the purposes of research.
- 6.2 Less formal collaboration shall normally involve access by the student to the facilities and other resources of the Collaborating Establishment. Supervision and other facilities will be provided by Queen Margaret University, but the Collaborating Establishment may provide a nominated advisor, or even a second supervisor, as part of the supervisory team. Examples would be where a student was conducting fieldwork outside the UK, or was registered on a non-resident basis. In such cases, a letter from the collaborating establishment should be provided, outlining the facilities that will be made available to the student.
- 6.3 More formal collaborations may involve joint supervision, intellectual property considerations or joint funding. Examples might include situations where a studentship is attached to a joint funding application, or a collaboration with an NHS research programme. In such cases, a Collaborative Agreement must be drawn up in which the performance obligations and responsibilities of each party are explicitly stated. The agreement shall set out the terms and conditions of collaboration, covering areas such as financial provisions, reporting, intellectual property, publication of results, and liability / indemnity. Guidance regarding this agreement is available from the Strategic Planning and Research Support Unit.
- 6.4 The contribution of the Collaborating Establishment must be duly acknowledged in the candidate's thesis.

Section III – Supervision

The supervisory relationship is key to the success of a research degree. This section sets out good practice in establishing and managing the relationship.

1 Composition of supervisory team

- 1.1 The minimum supervisory team consists of two appropriate supervisors, as detailed in the PhD (2015) or Prof Doc (2016) Regulations. In addition, one or more internal or external advisers may be attached to the team. The purpose of the team is to give the student access to a wider range of expertise and knowledge, especially in specific topics or methods of research. The team together determine the academic direction of the project, but this may vary depending on the make-up of the team and the experience of the supervisors.
- 1.2 The Supervisory Chair is the key contact for all administrative matters. The Chair is required to liaise on the student's behalf with the relevant University committees; to liaise with the Dean of School and support departments to ensure the student has access to resources and facilities; and to advise the student on regulations. The Chair has primary responsibility for monitoring the student's progress and identifying when further support is needed.
- 1.3 All supervisors are equally and jointly responsible for the academic progression of the student. If a supervisor(s) is likely to be absent for a long period of time (eg through illness) the remaining supervisors continue with supervision as normal. If for any reason both supervisors are absent, the Head of Graduate School should be made aware ASAP and before absence begins if possible. Alternative arrangements will be made until the supervisors can return.
- 1.4 The major part of the supervisor's role is to provide advice as required, to read draft work and give feedback. It is the student's responsibility to set up appointments / meetings with supervisors and proactively gain their input. All supervisors should be consulted about any decisions affecting the student's progress. It is important to keep all supervisors involved so they are in a position to maintain continuity of support whenever other supervisors are absent.
- 1.5 Advisers are appointed only for their input on specific areas of expertise. They do not form part of the formal supervisory team and have no responsibility for progress. They do not read draft work.
- 1.6 If a member of the supervision team leaves the employment of QMU after the student has submitted he or she will normally retain the role until completion. If a supervisor leaves prior to submission of the thesis, the remaining supervisor will take on the role of Chair for administrative purposes will take primary responsibility for academic progress.
- 1.7 Normally no more than one member of the team will be external to QMU. However, if a supervisor leaves QMU employment during the course of the student's studies, it may be preferable to retain the same team if their new circumstances allow them to continue to act as supervisors.
- 1.8 At least one member of the supervision team should have been involved in the supervision of a previous research degree candidate to successful completion. It is recommended that where possible the staff member with more experience takes the position of Chair, as this requires an understanding of regulations and managerial

processes. All supervisors should take responsibility for the academic direction of the project.

- 1.9 Where a relatively inexperienced member of staff is on the supervision team, it is essential that the more experienced member ensures that they are fully involved in the management of the student's programme and academic progress as this facilitates their development.
- 1.10 When a student is admitted a provisional supervision team is appointed. The University should not admit any student to a research degree programme if not satisfied that suitable provision can be provided. Confirmation of the supervisory team is appointed when the Outline Proposal and supervisors are confirmed by the School Academic Board.
- 1.11 Once the supervisory team has been agreed it is important that the full team meets to discuss the project and their respective roles. Ideally, the team should agree who will lead on different aspects of the project, the number of meetings to expect and timescales for reading drafts and providing feedback. It may be useful to consider whether one member is likely to take on a more pastoral role in relation to non-academic support. Ownership of the project direction should also be discussed. For instance, do the team agree that the student should define the project with the supervisors merely acting as critical friends? Or do they expect to define the parameters of the project with the student having less autonomy? (See also section 3 below.)
- 1.12 Regulations state that formal meetings between a student and a supervisor happens at least once a month (full time) or bi-monthly (part time). It is recommended that meetings between the student and the full supervisory team are held at least once a quarter. It is particularly important that the full team should meet to review progress at key stages such as probation, assessed seminars and preparation for thesis submission.

2 Training for supervisors

- 2.1 The Centre for Academic Practice organises training workshops for research supervisors. Any member of staff new to supervision is expected to attend. More experienced supervisors are also encouraged to attend these sessions to update themselves. All supervisors should attend some aspect of training once every two years.
- 2.2 It may be appropriate for a Graduate School Academic Board to require attendance at a supervision workshop as a condition of approval of a supervisory team.
- 2.3 Chairs must familiarise themselves with the regulations. The most recent version of the regulations can be found on the Quality website [here](#) (See Regulations tab).
- 2.4 Where possible, staff without supervision experience should be encouraged to develop their skills by working with a more experienced researcher. It is important that inexperienced supervisors in this situation should be fully involved in the supervision process in order to maximise the opportunities for learning.
- 2.5 There are a number of useful resources in the LRC regarding PhD supervision. Some suggested titles are listed below.
 - Taylor, S. and Beasley, N. 2005 *A Handbook for Doctoral Supervisors* Routledge, Abingdon

- Phillips, .EM. and Pugh, D.S. 2005 *How to get a PhD: a handbook for students and their supervisors* (4th ed) Maidenhead, Open University Press
- Wisker, G. 2005 *The Good Supervisor* Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan
- Eley, A.R. 2005 *Effective postgraduate supervision: improving the student/supervisor relationship* Maidenhead, Open University Press

3 The Supervisory Relationship – general expectations

- 3.1 Students should meet their supervisor(s) regularly throughout the prescribed period of study. Meetings may take place in person, by video or telephone conference, depending on the location of the student. It is recommended that full-time students should have some form of meeting with a supervisor at least once a month (on average). A part-time student should have contact every two months. However, the frequency of meetings will need to be greater at the beginning and end of the student's programme.
- 3.2 Records must be kept of all formal meetings. Formal meetings are defined as meetings which are scheduled in advance. It is the responsibility of the student to write up notes of the meeting, paying particular attention to agreed action points and deadlines. The notes should be sent to the supervision team for confirmation. These records will form an essential resource allowing the student and supervisory team to review progress and ensure actions are being followed up.
- 3.3 Supervisors are required to obtain a copy and store all formal meeting minutes in a secure folder on the University G:Drive. No information regarding the student should be kept on personal drives (in accordance with Data Protection Laws).
- 3.4 Students and supervisors may also meet on an unplanned basis. If such meetings result in an agreed action point or if important matters are discussed, the supervisor and student should exchange emails afterwards to confirm the substantive points. It is expected that there will be regular email correspondence between meetings and supervisors should keep emails for future reference.
- 3.5 It is good practice for the student and supervisors to discuss their expectations of the supervisory relationship early on. In particular, attention should be given to:
- Frequency of meetings
 - Communication arrangements
 - Responsibility for arranging meetings
 - Timetable of written work to be produced by the student
 - Turnaround time for feedback on written work
- 3.6 Supervisors will normally return feedback on draft work within three working weeks. However, students should be aware that at some times of year (for instance, the assessment period) this timescale may not be practical. Similarly, a longer period should be allowed for review of substantial pieces of work, especially the draft thesis. It is important that students should warn supervisors of their intention to submit work for comment, so that the supervisor can set aside time accordingly. Agreeing a timetable for draft chapters to come in will help both student and supervisor to plan their workload.
- 3.7 There is no set limit on the number of times students may submit the thesis (or sections thereof) for comment. It is recognised that students may need more feedback in the early stages of their degree and in such cases it may be appropriate

for more than one iteration of the work to be viewed by the supervisors. Normally, however, students should not need feedback on the same material more than once.

- 3.8 Students and supervisors are also advised to discuss intellectual ownership of the project at an early stage. In some cases, the project will have been designed by the a lead supervisor (perhaps as part of a research grant) and the student will have less autonomy. In other cases, the project may stem from the student's own initiative. In all cases, it is expected that the student will assume more control of the work as time goes on. If the supervisors are expecting the student to make more of an intellectual contribution to the project direction, it is important to let the student know this, as he or she may feel different about putting forward ideas in the presence of more experienced researchers. Equally, if the student was expecting to have greater freedom than the supervisors are in a position to give, it is important to address this as soon as possible.
- 3.9 Supervisors should be alert to the differences between individual students. An approach which has worked with other students in the past may not be appropriate to the current student. People from different countries, for instance, will have experienced different educational cultures which may alter their view of how the supervisory relationship should work. Open dialogue between the student and supervisor can help to resolve any mismatch in expectations.
- 3.10 Some students may find it helpful to use some form of e-portfolio as a means of keeping the supervisory team informed of progress. This option should be discussed with the student.
- 3.11 Supervisors should keep each other and the student informed of any planned periods of absence (eg annual leave or trips abroad). This allows the student to plan ahead and arrange supervisory meetings or submit draft work for comment at suitable times. Ideally, there should always be one member of the team contactable by email.
- 3.12 The Chair has a number of administrative responsibilities. Any paperwork that needs to be submitted to University committees should be submitted by the Chair, who will be expected to advise the student on committee approval procedures.
- 3.13 Supervisors responsible for international students on Tier 4 visas have a responsibility to the University for ensuring their student is complying with the terms of their visa. This includes ensuring the student is complying with the University processes for monitoring attendance and academic engagement.

4 The Supervisory Relationship – academic progress

- 4.1 The first thing the student has to do is plan the research project and complete an Outline Proposal and learning contract. The outline proposal should contain enough detail to establish what methods of investigation will be employed, and therefore what resources will be required, including the specific blend of expertise needed in the supervisory team. It is accepted that it is not possible to have a detailed plan at this early stage and that initial ideas may need to be modified once research starts. However, it is important to plan for any unusual resource demands as early as possible.
- 4.2 Planning a research project of this scale is not easy and students will normally require considerable input from the supervisory team. Some common pitfalls to avoid include:

- **Over-ambition** - it is not unusual for students to start with a very broad set of research objectives which need to be pruned down to a manageable research question. Supervisors should take care not to force the student to focus on the elements which most interest them at the expense of the elements which most interest the student.
- **Unrealistic timescales** - students often under-estimate the amount of work involved in data collection and fail to appreciate the difficulties of accessing participants, setting up meetings and recording data. Supervisors can usefully draw on their own experience of similar projects to advise the student about what to expect.
- **Lack of data management skills** – students may need support in developing practical skills such as recording and filing results, keeping lists of contacts, diary management, making the best use of reading and managing references. Supervisors should take steps to find out what level of skills the student has and help them to address any gaps.
- **Problems with collaborators** – many projects rely upon co-operation with another organisation, for instance an NHS Board or another University. It is essential that clear statements of support be obtained at an early stage so that the student knows whether or not he or she can definitely do what is planned.

- 4.3 Where a research student is working as a research assistant on a project under the direction of a Principal Investigator, particular care needs to be taken to ensure that the project undertaken by the student plausibly leads to the assessed outcomes of the degree for which they are registered. For a PhD in particular, the student is required to demonstrate an ability to operate as an independent researcher and make an original contribution to knowledge. Therefore the student must be given some independence in terms of planning and executing the project and the distinction between the student's contribution and that of the Principal Investigator needs to be made clear.
- 4.4 It is advisable that consideration be given to ethical issues at an early stage. Supervisors may wish to use the prompt questions on the ethical approval form to make sure the student has thought about all the possible risks to both the participants and the researcher. Supervisors should not countersign the ethical approval application form unless they are happy that the application is sound. It will cause unnecessary delay if the student has to resubmit a poorly explained application. See *Section II Good Research Practice* for more information about ethics.
- 4.5 The planning stage can feel very frustrating for students. Supervisors should encourage students to submit interim pieces of writing during this period. These could take the forms of drafts of early chapters of the thesis, such as the introduction and literature review. This will allow the student to have tangible evidence of achievement that can be used towards the final thesis. It also allows the supervisors to assess the student's writing skills and address any potential problems early.
- 4.6 Supervisors should be particularly alert to poor referencing or plagiarism so that the student can learn to avoid poor academic practice in the future.
- 4.7 In advising students on written work, supervisors may make comments or ask questions, but should avoid suggesting alternative text (except when to correct errors of English or grammar). All work put forward for assessment (whether for the probationary assessment, assessed seminars or the final examination) must be in the student's own words.

- 4.8 The first formal assessment for students is the probationary assessment. This normally takes the form of a research proposal of about 5000 words. It is assessed by a panel of two experienced researchers. Often, the assessors will not be subject experts. This means the written assignment should explain the project and choice of investigative methods in terms that a non-expert would understand. (See Progress for more detail)
- 4.9 Many students prefer to have one of their supervisory team attend the probationary viva as an observer. The observer may not speak unless addressed directly by the assessors. His or her role is to listen to the discussion and make notes on behalf of the student. The observer can also offer helpful feedback to the student on their performance.
- 4.10 The probationary assessors may make comments or suggestions regarding the project design but cannot force the student to make changes to the project design. However, the student and supervisory team should consider the assessors' advice carefully as it often takes an outsider's perspective to notice a potential flaw in the project design.
- 4.11 If, following the grant of ethical approval, any significant changes are made to the project design, the Secretary to the Research Ethics Committee must be consulted. It may be that a further form needs to be completed to secure approval for the revised protocol.
- 4.12 Data collection may start before the probationary assessment has been passed. Data collection may *not* start before ethical approval has been granted.
- 4.13 After the student has passed probation, responsibility for monitoring academic progress lies with the supervisory team. Supervisors are required to submit a brief annual report to the Graduate School (normally in October each year). These reports form a useful record in the event of any problems later on so it is important that supervisors complete them honestly. For instance, if a student has experienced delays due to circumstances beyond his or her control, it is important to have a note of this, as it may be possible to offer the student a suspension of study or extension to final registration date. Equally, if there are concerns about the student's academic ability or commitment, these need to be flagged up. Early intervention may help to resolve a problem before it becomes serious; if not, records such as annual reports will be essential in the event of an appeal or de-registration. (See section 7 below).
- 4.14 The Graduate School monitors academic progression through the timely and successful completion of the PhD progression stages (Outline Proposal, Probation, Assessed Seminars and thesis). Supervisors are accountable for timely and successful academic progression through these stages and should, therefore, counsel the student accordingly to ensure successful progression.
- 4.15 If a student has been unable to study for a month or more due to extenuating circumstances, a suspension should be applied for. This has the effect of extending the student's final registration date by the length of the suspension. Bursary students should be aware that payment of the bursary is normally stopped during the period of suspension (unless for a very short suspension). Fees are not normally recalculated, but the student is instead allowed the period of suspension free at the end of the prescribed period. For example, if a student suspends for 3 months, no continuation fee would be charged for the first 3 months of study beyond the end of the prescribed period.

- 4.16 Suspensions are agreed by the Graduate School Academic Board. The student must complete the form and the Chair must indicate support.
- 4.17 If a student is unable to submit by his or final registration date an extension must be applied for. **Research Councils have strongly urged universities to enforce registration periods rigorously so extensions cannot be granted lightly.** Students must apply to the Graduate School Academic Board, providing reasons for why the thesis will not be submitted on time and indicating a realistic timeline for completion.
- 4.18 It is not unusual for students to experience periods of lack of motivation in the middle of the degree. Supervisors can help by talking things over with the student, and perhaps encouraging the student to take short breaks when appropriate. It can also be useful to set short-term deadlines for tasks in order to provide milestones.
- 4.19 Students may find it helps their morale to attend conferences or submit papers for publication. This type of activity should be encouraged, as long as it doesn't conflict with writing up the thesis in good time. See section 5 below for more details.
- 4.20 Although data collection may take longer than anticipated, the period of writing up can also account for substantial delays in submitting theses. Many students underestimate the amount of re-drafting that will be required to provide a coherent, cogent and comprehensive thesis. Such difficulties are minimised if students have drafted the literature review and methods sections during the preliminary stages, although the review in particular will require updating and refining in the light of a student's own results and discussion. It is also important to update the review to incorporate recent publications in the field.
- 4.21 By the end of the period of study, it is normal for the student to know more about the specific topic than the supervisors do. The supervisory relationship will need to adapt to this shift in the balance of knowledge. However, the supervisor will still have a broader knowledge of the general field, and will have a clearer idea of what makes a good thesis. Supervisors therefore play a crucial role in helping the student produce a thesis that is likely to meet the standards for the award.
- 4.22 Students and supervisors may disagree about the final version of the thesis. Supervisors should bear in mind that it is the student who has to defend the work so he or she must have belief in the validity of the text. See *Section V Examination* for more detail on the process of signing the student declaration form for final submission.
- 4.23 All members of the supervisory team must read the complete thesis before it is submitted.
- 4.24 In agreeing that the thesis be submitted, the supervisors are not required to express a view as to whether or not it will pass. They are only saying that it stands a reasonable chance of success. Supervisors may feel under pressure to reassure the student about the quality of the work but it is important to remember that only the examiners' opinion counts for the final outcome. By the same token, students should not read too much into encouraging statements from supervisors.
- 4.25 In the lead up to the final examination, supervisors are recommended to offer a mock viva to the student. This allows the student to prepare for the most likely questions.

There are also resources available from CAP to guide students on the viva experience.

- 4.26 Many students, in mastering the details of their own study, become too focused and fail to appreciate that external examiners may be as interested in the wider implications of their research. A mock viva, therefore, may help them to consider how their work fits into a broader context.
- 4.27 The student has the option of inviting a member of the supervisory team to attend the viva as an observer. This decision is up to the student, who will know best whether they would find the presence of a supervisor supportive or distracting. The observer is required to stay silent unless specifically addressed by the examiners. An observer who speaks without being invited to do so may be ejected from the room.
- 4.28 The observer's main role is to take notes of the discussion in order to advise the student afterwards. In the case of major amendments or resubmission this is particularly important, as substantial portions of the thesis may require to be rewritten or even restructured. Normally, there will be a supervisory meeting a few days after the viva in which the student and supervisors discuss how to meet the examiners' recommendations and ensure a common understanding of what is required. It is also useful to debrief the student on his or her performance at viva.
- 4.29 Even if the student chooses to attend the viva without an observer, the supervisory team should be available before and after the examination for consultation and debriefing.
- 4.30 The process of amendments should not be treated as a formality. The supervisor's role is not complete until the student has been formally recommended for award.
- 4.31 It is normal practice for the student to provide the supervisors with a copy of the final thesis for future reference. This is usually electronic.

5 Supervisors' responsibilities – practicalities

- 5.1 The supervisors play a key role in helping the student to access resources and facilities required. When a new student starts at the University, staff of the Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement will put in motion processes to set up IT accounts, arrange for issue of Smartcards and the allocation of a desk and computer terminal. If any of the standard facilities listed under *Section 1 Facilities and Support* are not in place, the supervisors should negotiate on the student's behalf with the Dean of School.
- 5.2 The Chair will need to liaise with the Dean of School and technical staff regarding access to laboratory facilities / specialist equipment within QMU. Students on a QMU bursary or grant-funded studentship will have a budget on which they can draw for expenses and consumables. Normally, the Dean of School will be the authorised signatory on this budget. If it is felt more practical for either the supervisor(s) or senior technician to take over that role, appropriate paperwork should be sent to Finance.
- 5.3 Decisions as to how the budget is used should be made by consultation between the student, Chair and Dean. For some students the expenses of data collection will be less and the budget can therefore be used to support attendance at conferences. For others, priority should be given to paying for research expenses.

- 5.4 Self-funding or sponsored students who are undertaking laboratory research may be charged a bench fee to cover the costs of consumables. In this case it is appropriate for the bench fee to be ring-fenced as a separate budget from which payments can be authorised. The Chair should discuss with Finance the best way to set this up.
- 5.5 In cases where a student wishes to use facilities outside the University it is normal for the student to take responsibility for contacting the relevant organisations. The Chair may provide a letter of support as appropriate.
- 5.6 The Chair should ensure that their student is attending all necessary internal research skills training. The first year doctoral study weeks are mandatory for all doctoral candidates. The second and third year study weeks are not but supervisors should encourage and support students to attend.
- 5.7 The Chair should also assist the student in accessing necessary training. (See *Section VI Training and Personal Development*). If the student is to access Masters level modules offered by the University, the Chair should speak to the module co-ordinator and arrange for module registration via the School Office.
- 5.8 Occasionally it may be appropriate for the student to access training from outside the University. The Chair should discuss this with the Dean of School, who is responsible for deciding whether to authorise financial support from a relevant budget.
- 5.9 Supervisors have a general responsibilities in terms of supporting the student's career development. Depending on the direction the student hopes to take after graduation, the supervisors may be able to support the student in a number of ways:
- Inviting the student to research seminars
 - Introducing the student to key contacts in the profession
 - Encouraging the student to submit papers and abstracts to conferences or journals
 - Co-publishing with the student
 - Encouraging the student to become involved in activities such as teaching, conference organisation, systematic audits or literature reviews
- 5.10 Bursary students are required to undertake a certain number of hours of School duties (as stated in the bursary contract). The nature of these duties can be negotiated in order to provide the best career development for the student. The Chair should consult with the student and Dean of School / Head of Subject to agree a set of activities suitable to the individual student. A record of the hours worked must be kept by the student.
- 5.11 Students often take on part-time jobs. While each student will need to decide what level of workload he or she can manage, it is recommended that full-time students work no more than 12 hours a week additionally to the doctorate. Schools may offer part-time work to students but should be mindful of the danger of distracting the student from the project.
- 5.12 Students may wish to use the electronic portfolio and personal development plan facilities offered by the University. It would be useful for supervisors to discuss the PDP with the student and make suggestions as to how to meet goals where appropriate.

- 5.13 It is important to keep an eye on the student's attendance. If a student falls behind with study it is crucial to intervene as early as possible before the problem becomes serious. The University also has particular legal responsibilities in terms of checking the attendance and academic engagement of UKVI / Tier 4 students. For this reason, students must inform the supervisors and Graduate School when they are going on holiday or will be absent from campus for study leave e.g. data collection. It is sensible for students and supervisors to discuss absences and holiday timings in advance.
- 5.14 A full-time student is expected to devote approximately 35 hours a week (on average) to his or her study. For full time candidates, at least three days per week on campus per week is recommended to allow students to participate in other activities and engage with the wider research culture of the University.
- 5.15 Full-time students should normally be in contact with a supervisor at least once a month. However, it is normal for informal contact by phone and email to take place regularly in between meetings.
- 5.16 If supervisors have no contact with the student for four weeks (eight weeks for part time students), without any prior reason being stated (e.g. holiday, fieldwork), they should first check whether any of the other supervisors have had contact, or are aware of the reason for lack of activity. If there is no known reason for absence, the supervisors should contact the student to ask for an explanation.
- 5.17 The student's absence may be due to ill-health or personal circumstances, in which case it should be discussed whether a suspension of study is appropriate.
- 5.18 If the student remains out of contact with the supervisory team for six weeks (12 weeks for part time students), the supervisors should write formally to the student requesting an explanation. If no adequate explanation or reply is made the supervisors should refer the case to the Head of Graduate School. The Head of Graduate School will ask the Graduate School Officer to write to the student, giving him or her one month to reply. If no satisfactory reply or explanation is provided, the Head of Graduate School may recommend to GSAB that the student's registration be terminated. If the student is an overseas student on a student visa, the UKVI will be informed.
- 5.19 In cases where a student doesn't drop completely out of contact but overall levels of contact and academic engagement are generally worrying, the concern should be dealt with as a matter of inadequate progress (see *Progress*).

6 Non-resident and off-campus students

- 6.1 Some part time students will wish to register as non-resident or off-campus students. This means they will spend very little time on campus, and the bulk of supervision will be done by email and telephone. Studying off-campus may seem an attractive option for those who cannot afford to move to Edinburgh full-time and may be particularly relevant to students who want to conduct fieldwork in their own local area. However, it presents a number of difficulties and logistical issues. Most significantly, students based at a distance can feel isolated from the rest of the University. This means the student doesn't benefit from being around other researchers and learns less than they would if on campus. It can also be detrimental to motivation.
- 6.2 For this reason, we recommend that off-campus students make an effort to come to Edinburgh as much as possible. Supervisors should try to make the most of these

visits by timing them to coincide with, for instance, research seminars within the Subject Area or other networking opportunities. Supervisors should also visit the student from time to time.

- 6.3 Before agreeing to admit a student on a non-resident basis, the Head of Graduate School must be satisfied that the criteria listed in the Research Degree Regulations are met. In particular, it is important to be clear what access the student will have to local facilities. All off campus students are expected to attend all first year doctoral skills training sessions at QMU during their first year of study. The Chair is responsible for registering the student on the module to allow access to WebCT.
- 6.4 Regular communication is essential when studying off campus. It is recommended that students and supervisors contact each other at least once a week. Telephone time should be scheduled for more formal supervisory meetings. Skype may be used where this is available (Thin Client does not currently support this technology).
- 6.5 The same care should be taken over long-distance supervisory meetings as over face-to-face meetings. Any papers to be read in advance should be provided in adequate time. An agenda is useful to clarify what the purpose of the meeting is. The student should email the supervisor after the meeting to confirm what was discussed and any agreed action points.
- 6.6 Students should be encouraged to make full use of the range of resources available via the remote desktop. Instructions on how to log on and the services available are provided by the LRC.
- 6.7 Students are required to attend QMU for all mandatory study weeks, and to attend their probationary assessment viva, assessed seminars and final viva in person.
- 6.8 Students are expected to visit campus at least 3 times per year.

7 Resolving difficulties

- 7.1 The supervisory relationship is intense and problems may arise. Students are encouraged to make use of other members of the supervisory team to discuss any difficulties with an individual supervisor, as they may be able to intervene informally to help.
- 7.2 If the matter cannot be resolved within the supervisory team, the relevant Postgraduate School Coordinator should be consulted. If the student is still dissatisfied the matter may be raised with the Head of Graduate School. The Head of Graduate School may decide to change the supervisory team if necessary. Sometimes the problem may reflect an issue with the supervisor's overall workload which is preventing him or her from devoting sufficient time to the student, and the Head of Graduate School may be able to resolve this through discussion with the supervisor(s).
- 7.3 Students may feel reluctant to approach senior staff to complain about their supervisor. An alternative option is to ask to meet with the Graduate School Officer. The DSA may also be able to offer advice. It is important to raise problems early so they can be addressed before they become insurmountable. The Annual Progress Report provides an opportunity to raise any concerns confidentially and students should not be afraid to use this.

- 7.4 Many difficulties arise out of a mismatch of expectations about the way the supervision process should work. Sometimes these can be resolved by review of the issues listed under 3.3 – 3.7 above and drawing up a learning contract.
- 7.5 When a supervisor has concerns about a student's progress this naturally leads to tension within the relationship. It is important that the student and supervisor agree that the ultimate aim is to achieve a successful result and that any criticism of student performance should be offered and taken only in the spirit of helping to achieve that aim.
- 7.6 The Director of Studies has pastoral responsibility, and is encouraged to be alert to emerging problems. The University provides Student Support and a Counselling Service, as detailed in the Student Handbook. Difficulties in the supervisory relationship may in fact be symptoms of underlying problems in other parts of the student's life.

8 Use of external supervisors

- 8.1 It is preferred that the Director of Studies and at least one second supervisor should be members of staff. This ensures there is nearly always somebody on the spot at the University who can be available to meet the student or who can liaise with another part of the University on the student's behalf. However, it is not uncommon for external supervisors to be part of the team, either as part of a collaborative project or because of that person's particular expertise. Equally, staff who leave the University may continue as supervisors if that is acceptable to the new employer.
- 8.2 External supervisors are not paid formally, but they are eligible for honoraria according to the following scale.
- Director of Studies (full-time student) - £250
 - Director of Studies (part-time student) - £200
 - Second Supervisor (full-time student) - £150
 - Second Supervisor (part-time student) - £100

Honoraria are paid annually by the Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement.

- 8.3 Travelling expenses will normally be borne by the School.
- 8.4 Members of staff who have retired may be offered honorary contracts to allow them to continue to supervise students who have not yet completed. It is essential that the staff member's email account remains open to facilitate communication. If the honorary staff member is not able to be on campus regularly serious consideration should be given to the appointment of an alternative Director of Studies to deal with administrative matters, with the retired staff member remaining on the team as Second Supervisor.

9 Summary of roles and responsibilities

- 9.1 Ultimately, a research student has responsibility for his or her own work, the production of a thesis, its submission on time, and its quality. Supervisors, primarily the Director of Studies, should provide the support and guidance, expertise and experience, help and advice, criticism and encouragement necessary for their student's development as a mature scholar capable of achieving a research degree and pursuing independent research. A Dean of School needs to ensure that the

environment, in terms of facilities and supervisory resource, is conducive to the goal of a successful and timely completion.

9.2 Responsibilities of the Supervisors

Copy from handbook

9.3 Responsibilities of the Director of Studies:

In addition to the responsibilities above, the Director of Studies is individually responsible for:

- a) ensuring that the student is appropriately inducted into the School
- b) consulting with the Dean of School to ensure that appropriate School facilities are available
- c) meeting with the student on a regular basis – within the first semester for a full-time student it is expected that meetings will be held weekly, and thereafter not less than monthly for the duration of the prescribed period of study (pro-rata for part-time students)
- d) ensuring that there are normally no periods in excess of three weeks during which the student cannot contact one member of the supervisory team
- e) arranging liaison with Second Supervisors and advisors where necessary
- f) arranging joint meetings of the full supervisory team with the student at least every six months for full-time students and yearly for part-time students – it is recommended that there be a joint meeting before submission of the proposal and the probationary report
- g) drawing up with the student a staged timetable for completion of the work and reviewing this periodically, at least once per semester and on preparation of reports
- h) agreeing with the student leave of absence and agreeing with the student and Dean of School appropriate teaching (or other duties) commitments
- i) submitting reports and / or forms to the GSAB or School Academic Board in good time
- j) consulting with the supervisory team with regard to submission of reports and / or forms
- k) ensuring that there is clear understanding of the ethical issues relevant to the research and that ethical approval is requested in time to avoid unnecessary delay to the student's progress
- l) submitting applications for suspensions or extensions (with or on behalf of the student) as soon as possible should they prove necessary
- m) ensuring that the student is aware of Health and Safety regulations and of any potential hazards associated with the project
- n) in the case of students in receipt of a bursary, alerting the Dean of School to any likelihood of resource demands for the project exceeding those originally assumed
- o) making every effort to ensure that the student submits his or her thesis in good time

9.4 Responsibilities of students:

The responsibilities of the student include:

- a) becoming familiar with the University's regulations, the Research Degree Regulations and procedures

- b) agreeing a schedule of meetings with supervisors, initiating requests for additional meetings as required, and sharing responsibility for the agenda to be followed in these meetings
- c) attendance at the University's Research Training Course (unless formally exempt)
- d) submission of assignment(s)
- e) ensuring that annual leave or periods of absence for fieldwork purposes and the extent of teaching and other commitments have been agreed with the Director of Studies and Dean of School
- f) familiarisation with Health and Safety regulations and bringing forward, for discussion with supervisors, any potential hazards
- g) discussing with supervisors any ethical issues associated with the research and securing ethical approval
- h) submitting reports and / or forms to relevant University committees in good time
- i) clarifying mutual expectations with the supervisors
- j) discussing with the supervisors the type of guidance and comment that the student finds most helpful
- k) taking the initiative in raising problems or difficulties relating to the work (including supervision) and discussing these with the supervisor(s) before actively seeking other advice as appropriate
- l) informing the supervisors as early as possible of any matter that may affect progress toward the research degree
- m) attaining skills and competencies appropriate to the conduct of research
- n) maintaining the progress of the work in accordance with the timetable agreed with supervisors including, in particular, the submission of written material as required in sufficient time to allow supervisors to provide appropriate written feedback and discussion
- o) keeping systematic and accurate records of all work undertaken and complying with standards of professional conduct and data protection legislation
- p) seeking opportunities for constructive criticism from peers and colleagues
- q) deciding when he or she is ready to submit the thesis taking due account of the supervisors' opinion which is, however, advisory only
- r) ensuring appropriate dissemination / publication of his or her work, and ensuring that the involvement of supervisors is duly acknowledged in such activity
- s) making available all raw data to supervisors as requested
- t) providing a final bound copy and electronic copy of the thesis on completion

9.5 Responsibilities of the Dean of School:

The duties of the Dean of School are concerned with ensuring appropriate facilities, resources and supervision are in place to support the student in his or her studies. The Dean also has overall responsibility for student progress prior to final examination.

- a) before accepting a research student into a School, being satisfied that the applicant meets appropriate entry requirements and is suited to pursuing a research degree, and that an appropriate Director of Studies is available
- b) ensuring that individual members of staff who constitute the supervisory team are appropriately experienced and qualified and that supervisors are allocated sufficient time to fulfil their role satisfactorily
- c) being satisfied that School facilities and arrangements are in place
- d) being satisfied that sufficient resources are in place, or will be made available as and when required by the research student and authorising expenditure accordingly

- e) where research facilities or resources from outside the School are required, it is the responsibility of the Dean of the School in which the student is based to confirm the availability of these resources
- f) agreeing, in consultation with the Director of Studies, the extent and nature of duties to be performed as part of the bursary contract
- g) where relevant, reviewing reports and / or forms being submitted to the GSAB by the research student and Director of Studies, acting upon any issues arising, and commenting as appropriate to the GSAB
- h) through the School Academic Board, monitoring student progress and making decisions on changes of registration status, suspension of study or changes of supervisory team
- i) attempting to resolve any disagreements that may arise between supervisors or between supervisors and the research student
- j) in appropriate circumstances (e.g. following the departure of a member of staff from the institution or prolonged and irresolvable difficulties between supervisors and / or supervisor and student) recommending, following consultation with those involved, a change to the supervisory team
- k) the nomination of examiners to the GSAB for approval

Section IV – Progress

This sections sets out procedures and best practice in relation to matters of student progress, especially in relation to modifications to the period of study, transfer, and concerns over inadequate progress.

The functions of the proposal stage, probationary assessment and assessed seminars are discussed as well as other mechanisms for monitoring progress.

1 Abbreviation of study

- 1.1 Some students will be in a position to complete in a shorter time than the prescribed period. This may be because they are drawing on previous work in a related field, because they have made faster than expected progress, or because they have transferred from another institution.
- 1.2 There are two ways to abbreviate the study period: at the beginning, students may apply for credit in order to reduce the prescribed period; while at the end of registration students may apply for permission to submit early.
- 1.3 Applying for credit: the student should submit their research proposal and project plan with a covering letter clarifying the progress that has been made and stating how much reduction to the prescribed period is requested. Where the previous research was undertaken in collaboration with others, students must demonstrate that there are no objections or concerns in relation to ownership of intellectual property. The GSAB will then make a decision based on the evidence presented.
- 1.4 The effect of being awarded credit is to reduce the prescribed period. A full-time student who is awarded 12 months credit, for instance, would only require to pay fees for two years. If the student did not submit within two years he or she would then be allowed one continuation year. The student's final deadline for submission would be three years after initial registration.
- 1.5 Early submission: the student should write to the Secretary of the GSAB stating:
 - Roughly when he or she intends to submit
 - Giving some background as to how it is he or she has managed to complete the thesis so quickly
 - Including a statement from the student's supervisors confirming that the quality of the thesis is satisfactory and that the student's prospects of success will not be adversely affected by the decision to submit early
- 1.6 Normally these statements will be appended to the Examination Arrangements form which is submitted to the GSAB at this time for approval of the examination team.
- 1.7 Students should not register part-time if they are in fact working full-time on the project. Permission will not be granted to submit early in these circumstances.
- 1.8 Transfers: students may apply to move their PhD from another institution to QMU. In order to do this the student must complete the standard application form and provide information about their research. This will normally take the form of a research proposal and project plan with an indication of how much progress has been made.

- 1.9 Applications will be assessed by the Postgraduate Research Coordinator in the usual way. However, it is important to find out:
- Is the student's current institution aware of the proposed transfer? Are there any issues over ownership of intellectual property?
 - How much has the student done already? Has some form of probationary assessment been passed? If not, why not?
 - Is the student transferring because of disagreements with his or her previous supervisors? QMU should not pre-judge the rights and wrongs of any such disagreement but it is reasonable to be wary of taking on a student who may not be prepared to accept criticism.
- 1.10 Transferring students will need to apply to the GSAB for credit (see above). At that time it may be appropriate to apply for exemption from probationary assessment where evidence can be provided that the student has been through a similar process at their own institution. Normally, however, the student will need to go through some form of probation at QMU.
- 1.11 Even if the student has received ethical approval to conduct the study at his or her previous institution, fresh ethical approval will be required to conduct research on QMU staff or students.
- 1.12 If a QMU student wishes to transfer to another institution, the University will normally support this, provided the student's supervisors are appropriately recognised for any intellectual property they have contributed to the project. If it is possible for the QMU supervisor to remain on the team as a second supervisor that may be desirable.
- 1.13 Credit for other forms of previous study: In cases where a student is seeking credit for relevant research experience in industrial laboratories or other organisations (including those supporting creative practice), the request should be made at the outline proposal stage.
- 1.14 Maximum credit will normally be as follows: PhD (full-time 12 months; part-time 24 months), MPhil (full-time 6 months; part-time 12 months). However, the GSAB will consider each case on its merits.
- 1.15 The GSAB may give more extended credit for previous research to applicants who wish to transfer their postgraduate registration to Queen Margaret University in cases where their Director of Studies is joining the University as a member of academic staff.
- 1.16 Credit will not be given for research for which the student has already been granted an award, eg research undertaken as part of a Master of Philosophy or Master of Research.

2 PhD Outline proposals

- 2.1 Two months (maximum) after matriculation for full-time students or four months (maximum) after matriculation for part-time students, an outline proposal should be submitted to the GSAB for approval. The GSAB's role is to confirm that the necessary facilities and resources can be put in place to support the project and to confirm the supervisory team. Outline proposals will normally be considered by the GSAB.

- 2.2 It is recognised that not all students will be in a position to provide much detail on their projects at this stage. However, it is important to establish the supervisory team as early as possible.
- 2.3 In framing the outline proposal, students should provide enough information to allow the GSAB to judge:
- The resource implications of the project (laboratory facilities, consumables, software, travel);
 - Any specialist expertise that is required in the supervisory team;
 - Any input required from organisations outside QMU and whether permission has been secured from those organisations;
 - Any additional training that the student will require.
- 2.4 Short CVs for each proposed supervisor must be attached to allow the Board to assess whether the team meets the requirements of the project and satisfies the Research Degree regulations.
- 2.5 Once the School has approved an outline proposal it is committed to supporting the research project as described. Any changes to the project which affect the resource requirements must be discussed with the Dean of School.

3 PhD Probation

- 3.1 All students must undergo a probationary assessment (except for transferring students in the circumstances outlined above). The probationary assessment will normally take place six months after initial matriculation for full-time students, or ten months for part-time students. Students may apply to the GSAB for permission to delay the assessment, but may not delay beyond 12 months full-time or 24 months part-time. If the candidate's registration is not confirmed by this time, the student will be deregistered. Where a student is unable to meet this final deadline due to extenuating circumstances, the student should request an extension from the GSAB. Bear in mind that unless the circumstances are truly extenuating and supported by evidence, an extension will not be granted.
- 3.2 Non-resident students are expected to visit QMU to attend their probationary assessment viva in person.
- 3.3 The purpose of the probationary assessment is to give the student and supervisor an independent assessment of the student's progress and to highlight any potential weaknesses at an early stage so they can be rectified. It is essential that any progress issues are addressed promptly and not left unresolved. The inclusion of a short viva voce examination also provides the student with practice for the final viva.
- 3.4 Students are advised to take the probationary assessment seriously, in that it provides an opportunity for them to measure themselves against the expected standards and confirm whether their research plan will lead to successful and timely completion. Students should nevertheless be reassured that the assessment will be conducted in a constructive manner with the overarching aim of improving the student's research. It is not intended to be an impediment to students' progression.
- 3.5 The panel should consist of two experienced researchers, ideally at professorial level. One will act in the role of Chair. Normally, one assessor would have some level of relevant subject expertise and understanding of the research methodology, although this is not essential.

- 3.6 A pool of suitable assessors will be established and members selected for each individual student depending on the nature of the project. Supervisors may make recommendations of appropriate assessors, however, final panels will be selected by the Head of Graduate School and Postgraduate Research Coordinators. Where possible, members' research background should match the broad research paradigm of the student (ie qualitative / quantitative). Deans of School should not be panellists.
- 3.7 In the event of a resubmission, the original panel would be retained.
- 3.8 Supervisory teams should bear in mind that assessors would not normally be able to act as internal examiners for the student when it came to the final oral examination.
- 3.9 Each assessor should complete a preliminary report prior to the meeting, indicating areas for discussion and a provisional recommendation. The Chair should use these to form the basis of the agenda for the meeting and to assist in drafting the final report.
- 3.10 Students should not be expected to be at PhD level at this stage, but they should demonstrate that they are *working towards* the PhD criteria. Assessors should consider:
- Clarity of research aims
 - Grasp of research methods
 - Understanding of possible limitations of study
 - Depth of literature review (if applicable)
 - Quality of writing and presentation
- 3.11 The meeting between the student and panel should take no more than one hour. One or more of the supervisory team may accompany the student (if the student so wishes) but may not speak unless directed to by the Chair. At the end of the meeting the panel will meet privately to agree the outcome. The student and supervisor(s) will then be called back to hear the recommendation and discuss any issues.
- 3.12 The meeting should be conducted in a polite and supportive atmosphere. It should be recognised that most assessors will not be experts in the topic area and therefore the focus is more on the student explaining the research than defending it.
- 3.13 A student should not be referred solely on the grounds of a poor performance in the oral element unless there is reason to doubt the student's ownership of the written work.
- 3.14 Resubmission by written work only should be allowed in cases where the student has demonstrated good understanding of the project in their oral defence. Weaker students may be asked to retrieve both elements.
- 3.15 The time-scale for retrieval should be discussed with the student and supervisor, but will normally be 6 weeks for a full-time student; 12 weeks part-time.
- 3.16 The panel may make recommendations regarding changes to the project plan but must recognise that the supervisors are the experts in the area of research and therefore cannot enforce a change to the research plan. It is up to the Supervisors and the student to decide how to respond.

- 3.17 The actual progress decision is made by the GSAB, on the basis of the Panel's recommendation. To avoid unnecessary delay the GSAB will normally take Convener's Action or get approval from both Postgraduate Research Coordinators. The Graduate School will then relay the decision and report to the student.
- 3.18 It is important that feedback to the student is clear, especially when a resubmission is asked for. Assessors should give as much detail as possible to allow the student to pass at the next attempt.
- 3.19 Only in exceptional circumstances would the Panel recommend deregistration and normally this should only be recommended once the student had been offered three submission attempts.

4 Assessed Seminars

5 Annual progress reports

- 5.1 Every year, the student and Chair will be asked to provide a short progress report. Reports are collected by the Graduate School, who then provide a summary of issues for consideration by the GSAB.
- 5.2 Each report should be completed separately. The student's report will not be shared with the supervisors without the student's consent. The supervisor's report will not normally be shared with the student unless the student specifically requests it in terms of the Data Protection Act.
- 5.3 The purpose of the annual progress report system is to alert the Graduate School to any problems or issues. This allows action to be taken as appropriate. Students may wish to use the report to highlight any difficulties with supervision or facilities. Equally, it is important that supervisors record any concerns they may have about slow or inadequate progress.
- 5.4 If more serious difficulties arise, annual reports should form a useful record of how and when issues have arisen and what action was proposed to deal with them. It is worth bearing in mind that annual reports may form part of the evidence in an appeal.

6 Expected progress

- 6.1 Research degrees present particular challenges when compared to a taught degree. Students may struggle to adjust to the relative lack of deadlines and milestones. Supervisors have an important role to play in promoting time management skills, not only through negotiating and monitoring the overall study programme but also in encouraging students to break this down into a series of small steps with short-term goals and associated deadlines. It should not be assumed that students can immediately take responsibility for this without support.
- 6.2 Nevertheless, as the student moves into the mid stages of their programme, he or she should assume more control over their studies and act with increasing autonomy. Every student is different, but as an approximation, the following table sets out the broad expectations of progress:

Full-time		Part-time	
End Year 1	Research questions identified; methods of investigation agreed; ethical approval applied for	End Year 2	Research questions identified; methods of investigation agreed; ethical approval applied for
Early Year 2	Ethical approval secured; data collection started	Early Year 3	Ethical approval secured; data collection started
End Year 2	Significant proportion of data collection complete; decision made as to whether follow up studies are needed; introductory and literature review chapters drafted	End Year 4	Significant proportion of data collection complete; decision made as to whether follow up studies are needed; introductory and literature review chapters drafted
Mid Year 3	Data collection complete; analysis started	End Year 5	Data collection complete; analysis started
End Year 3	Thesis drafted and submitted for formal examination	End Year 6	Thesis drafted and submitted for formal examination
End Year 4	Amendments to thesis completed and degree awarded.	Year 7	Amendments to thesis completed and degree awarded.

- 6.3 All students should aim to submit their thesis by the end of their prescribed period, however, it is recognised that slightly later submission is not uncommon. All students should aim to have their degree awarded to them by the end of year 4 (full time) and year 7 (part time).
- 6.4 It is important that supervisors ask to see written work regularly throughout the period of study. This allows any problems with academic writing to be addressed early. It also helps the student to spread out the amount of writing that needs to be done, particularly if drafts can be incorporated into the thesis.
- 6.5 Where a student is based off campus or is conducting fieldwork abroad it can be particularly difficult for the supervisory team to monitor progress. This makes regular meetings and the production of written work especially crucial.
- 6.6 The relationship between the student and supervisors will evolve over time. Initially, students will depend on their supervisors for guidance and direction. By the end of the first year students should have a detailed knowledge of research in their chosen area (which will often be more detailed than that of individual supervisors) and a clear view of the contribution of their own proposed investigation to this field of research. By this stage, therefore, students should be developing confidence and independence, and engaging in discussion with their supervisors rather than merely seeking advice. This gradual shift of control to the student should be encouraged, with the supervisor assuming a counselling rather than an advisory role.
- 6.7 Supervisors should take action if any of the following concerns arise:
- The student misses meetings or fails to respond regularly to messages
 - The student regularly misses targets set at supervisory meetings
 - The quality of the student's writing consistently falls below the level required
 - The student appears unable to understand key concepts
 - The student is still looking to the supervisors to tell him or her what to do, even in the mid and later stages of the degree
 - The supervisor finds evidence of plagiarism, unprofessional conduct or research malpractice

7 Resolving progress issues

7.1 Lack of contact.

When a student has not been in contact with the supervisory team for four weeks (full-time) or two months (part-time) the supervisors should take steps to investigate the reason for absence. See *Section III Supervision*, sub-section 5, for full details of the procedure.

7.2 When the student is not completely out of contact but the supervisors are concerned that the frequency of contact is inadequate, a formal meeting should be held with the student and a timetable for more regular communication set. This should be logged in the student's file.

7.3 It may transpire that the student has health or personal problems which are preventing him or her from dedicating time to the degree. In this case, the student should be encouraged to apply for a suspension of studies. With the permission of the student, supervisors can make a request of their behalf.

7.4 A period of suspension should be requested at the time it is required. Retrospective suspensions will not be approved by the GSAB unless there are very exceptional circumstances, so students must be proactive in making a suspension requests. Students fail to make a request for suspension at the appropriate time at their own risk.

7.5 Academic issues

The probationary assessment provides one formal mechanism for dealing with doubts about the student's academic level. A student who fails to pass after three attempts (or within the defined time limits) will be recommended to the GSAB for deregistration.

7.6 The supervisory team should support the student to submit the probationary assessment in the same way that they support a student writing the thesis. In other words, they should provide comments on drafts but not suggest specific revisions.

7.7 Post probation, if a supervisor is concerned about a student's lack of progress, this should be discussed first with the rest of the supervisory team. A formal meeting should be held with the student explaining the consequences of failure to improve. Normally the outcome of the meeting would be an action plan to address the problems, for instance a timetable of more frequent meetings, or assignments the student agrees to do to demonstrate improved understanding of key points.

7.8 It is essential that the outcome of this meeting is documented, in case of future appeals. Students may not realise the seriousness of the problems unless they are given something in writing.

7.9 If the supervisor(s) remain concerned or if the student fails to comply with the agreed action plan, he or she should consult with the full supervisory team to agree whether a report should be made to the Head of Graduate School. In any case, problems must be recorded in a formal meeting minute and the annual progress report. This may trigger action from the Head of Graduate School if the problems are still unresolved.

7.10 If the Head of Graduate School believes the supervisory team have taken all reasonable steps to improve the student's performance but without success, he or she will normally arrange to meet with the student. It is important the student should

have an opportunity to respond to the concerns raised. He/She will discuss with the student whether the project can continue. Where students are based overseas alternative arrangements for this meeting will be applied.

7.11 This meeting may result in one of three outcomes:

- the student continues in registration;
- the student continues in registration conditionally on the attainment of certain agreed targets; or
- a recommendation is made to the GSAB that the student's registration be terminated.

7.12 Deregistration may be recommended providing the full supervisory team have been consulted. If it is the opinion of the supervisors that the academic capabilities of the student are unlikely improve even with additional support and / or training, and that successful and timely completion of the research programme is unlikely, then a recommendation of deregistration is likely to progress.

7.13 Withdrawal

The decision to withdraw is entirely up to the student. However, students should always discuss the situation first with their supervisors. It may be that the difficulties can be resolved in another way. For instance, the student could ask for a suspension of studies to relieve the time pressure; a change might be made to the research protocol; or perhaps additional training could be sourced to help the student with a problem area.

Section V – Examination

This section covers all aspects of examination, from writing up the final thesis to completion of amendments.

1 Examination

1.1 The process of gaining a postgraduate research degree is one of transition from an apprentice status to that of a mature scholar who has fully demonstrated the capacity for independent professional research. It is the task of the supervisory team to manage this transition to the stage of final examination. It deserves the strongest emphasis that at this final stage the candidate is independently responsible for the quality of the thesis, and that the responsibility for the defence of the thesis is the candidate's alone. Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that in this final examination, the standards and procedures of the institution are under external scrutiny as well as the achievements of the candidate. The University is required to monitor and report on viva outcomes and has a vested interest in gaining a reputation for producing strong graduates.

2 Timing of submission

2.1 Research Councils recommend that a student should be able to complete a PhD in three years if full-time, six years part-time. This timescale will only be met if no unforeseen obstacles or delays occur; as such unforeseen delays are not uncommon many students do in fact submit during the course of their fourth year (FTE).

2.2 The University is required to monitor and report on its completion rates. The Graduate School target is 75% of students completing (i.e. degree being awarded) within 4 years from date of registration. Therefore students and supervisors are encouraged to do everything they can to prioritise timely submission of the thesis. IN this instance, it is essential that unexpected issues are resolved quickly and suspensions are only requested in the most serious of circumstances. Schools should be wary of inviting students to become involved in other activities, such as teaching or other research projects, at the expense of completing the thesis.

2.3 If a student is not going to be able to submit on time he or she may apply for an extension. The GSAB has a responsibility to enforce deadlines equitably and will only grant extensions where the student can demonstrate that circumstances beyond his or her control have prevented the deadline from being met. Extensions are not an automatic right and not granted lightly.

2.4 The thesis must be the candidate's own work and responsibility for its eventual success or failure rests with the student. Supervisors should be willing to comment on drafts of the thesis, but they are not in a position to state definitively that the thesis will or will not pass. Only the examiners may make that judgement. At best supervisors can offer their opinion that the thesis is good enough to give the student a reasonable chance of passing, providing the student defends the work adequately at viva.

2.5 Students should appreciate that positive feedback from supervisors is not a valid ground for appeal as only the examiners' assessment of the quality of the thesis can be considered.

2.6 All theses contain strengths and weaknesses and it is normal for the examiners to require some amendments. Examiners will not be overly concerned about weakness

in the written work if the student shows a good understanding of the subject and an awareness of any limitations. Examiners will however be concerned if the student appears unable to understand that there are any deficiencies in his or her work even when these are pointed out. For this reason, producing a defensible thesis is not in itself a guarantee of a good result. Much depends on the conversation during the viva. (See more below)

2.7 The decision to submit the thesis is the student's own and it is up to the student to decide whether or not the thesis is ready, although advice from supervisors is clearly important. Some factors that should be considered include:

- **Fees** - If the thesis is submitted by the end of the prescribed period no continuation fee will be charged. This should only make a difference to the timing of submission if the thesis is more or less finished – rushing submission is likely to lead to more substantial amendments at the very least and a more difficult viva experience. Students should contact the Graduate School if concerned about the fees position.
- **Editing** – this has to end eventually. It is always possible to keep revising a thesis but there comes a point when it is better to submit than to continue editing. No thesis is perfect and almost all require some revision post examination.

2.8 When the student receives feedback from supervisors on the final draft it is the student's decision how to incorporate that feedback. The student has the right to ignore supervisory advice. In some cases, where the supervisors themselves disagree on a point, only the student can make the final decision. It is the student who will have to defend the thesis and he or she must feel able to argue the case for choices made. Equally, the student must accept the consequences if the examiners disagree with those choices.

2.9 If the supervisors have significant concerns about the quality of the thesis, this should be recorded on the candidate declaration form. This form serves two functions:

- **Confirmation of authorship.** The student formally confirms that the text of the thesis is all his or her own work. The supervisors must have read the final version of the thesis so they too can confirm this statement. The form should also confirm whether any parts of the thesis have been published independently, eg as part of journal papers.
- **Confirmation of supervisory approval.** Normally, the supervisory team will have discussed the final draft extensively with the student and will be comfortable that the submitted thesis is at least defensible. However, if there have been disagreements with the student or if the supervisors have concerns about the quality of the thesis this should be recorded.

2.10 Where the supervisors indicate concerns on the declaration form, there are two options. If the student has time left before the final registration date, he or she may take the thesis back to make further changes. If the final registration date has passed, it may be possible to ask the GSAB for a short extension in order to make amendments (depending on the circumstances of the case). However, if the student does not wish to make any further changes he or she may proceed with the submission. The student must sign to confirm he or she is aware of the supervisors' opinion but still wishes to proceed.

- 2.11 Sometimes when a student is running out of time there may be no option other than to submit the thesis in an unpolished state. This is permissible within the regulations. It is likely that the examiners will require substantial amendments or possibly even resubmission. However, the student would then receive the appropriate amount of time to make those amendments. This therefore may be the pragmatic option when the deadline is looming.

3 Thesis

- 3.1 The final decision as to how to structure the thesis and what to include is the student's own. However, the normal structure would be:
- Abstract (no more than 300 words)
 - Acknowledgements
 - Contents (including a list of tables, figures and diagrams)
 - Introduction
 - Literature review
 - Methods
 - Results
 - Discussion
 - Conclusion
 - References and bibliography
 - Appendices
- 3.2 Students should refer to section 10 of the research degree regulations for more detailed information on the required format.
- 3.3 The maximum length of a thesis is 100,000 words for PhD. The figures given for minimum length (70,000 words) are indicative only as this may vary with the conventions of different subject areas. Students should seek guidance from supervisors on normal expectations in their discipline.
- 3.4 In the case of a thesis including creative writing, the critical commentary should normally be within the range of 30,000 to 40,000 words for PhD. These word lengths relate to the critical text only – any text being commented on is excluded from the word count.
- 3.5 Students should be wary of exceeding the word limit. A thesis which is over the word limit will not be accepted. In exceptional circumstances, the student may apply to the GSAB for permission to exceed the limit. However, experience suggests that most lengthy theses would benefit from editing. The editing process forces the student to clarify what are the most important points, thus making the argument tighter and more focussed. A shorter thesis is generally easier and more pleasurable for an examiner to read, and this should also be taken into account.
- 3.6 Similarly, bulky appendices should be avoided. Examiners should be able to understand the thesis from the full argument presented in the main body of the text. It is not necessary to provide all data collected. Anonymised samples of questionnaires or interviews may be included but it would not normally be appropriate to include all interviews.
- 3.7 Accompanying creative work may be provided as an appendix. The format in which it is presented will vary, but it must be in such a way as to be easily referenced and accessed by the examiners. Each item should be individually labelled, with relevant

details including the candidate's name. For instance, it may be appropriate to include a DVD of a performance or photographs of artistic works.

- 3.8 Copies of published material should be made available in accordance with Regulation 10.5. Reference shall be made in the thesis to any such work. Where material is jointly authored the student must clarify the extent of his or her role. The examiners will make their judgement solely on the thesis itself, but it provides useful context if they can see published material that has arisen from the project.
- 3.9 No part of a thesis may have been included in a submission for any other degree or qualification without the permission of the GSAB (Regulation 9.6.2). The aim of this Regulation is to protect against double submission. The student should be able to use and refer to his or her previous work, but this should not be included verbatim. It is considered legitimate to use data from a different degree, but only small amounts of previous data would be acceptable for this purpose.
- 3.10 Outsize documents and non-print items should be placed in a pocket attached to the inside back cover of the thesis [or in a large envelope in the case of examination copies] (see Regulation 10.7). In some cases it might be helpful for the examiners to have access to an electronic form of data, where a disk would be included as an appendix. However there has to be a rationale for including non-print data for examination or as part of the documentation in terms of an archive.
- 3.11 Students are strongly advised to make arrangements to have the thesis proof-checked prior to submission. Supervisors are unlikely to have time to make line by line correction of spelling, grammatical and typographical errors. While examiners are more interested in the academic substance of the thesis than its presentation, professionalism and accuracy are very important. One of the criteria for award is the ability to communicate at the standard of published work.
- 3.12 One copy of the thesis and any additional material must be provided for each examiner. In some cases an extra copy may be required for the Chair (see below). A further electronic copy should be submitted by email or on a memory stick. These should be submitted, along with the Candidate's Declaration form, to the Secretary to the GSAB in Registry for distribution to the examiners.

4 Selecting examiners

- 4.1 For most students there will be an internal and an external examiner. Candidates who are members of staff must have two external examiners. Examiners should have a PhD or equivalent experience.
- 4.2 The internal examiner must be somebody with enough general knowledge of the subject to understand the arguments of the thesis, but not necessarily an expert in that area. The external examiner, however, should be more specialist. It is preferred that the external examiner have experience of examining at this level so that he or she is in a position to confirm that the award is comparable with similar degrees awarded at other universities.
- 4.3 Possible external examiners may be identified from the literature search if they have published in the field or from attendance at conferences. If the external is an expert in the field it would be expected that the student would have read the examiner's work and referred to it in the thesis.

- 4.4 The Chair and student should discuss possible examiners to confirm their suitability. It is important that the student reveals any previous contact with the suggested examiners to avoid either possible conflict of interest or personal antagonism. No member of the candidate's current or previous supervisory team (including any formal advisors), research collaborators or anyone with a close association with the candidate's research, may act as an examiner. Obviously, relatives or personal friends would not be appropriate.
- 4.5 The Chair should then consult with the Head of Graduate School. Normally the Head of Graduate School will approach the internal examiner as this may be viewed as an allocation of workload. The Chair may approach the external personally or may ask the Head of Graduate School to do this if it is felt more appropriate (eg if the proposed external is quite senior and it was felt the approach should come from an equally senior member of staff). In both cases, the examiners should be told the likely date of submission of the thesis and hence the likely date for the viva (6-8 weeks after submission). If both examiners confirm they are willing and able, the Chair must prepare paperwork for the GSAB.
- 4.6 Students and supervisors should note that if there is a delay in submission examiners who had previously expected to be available at the right time for the viva may find themselves with other commitments. The Chair should alert the proposed examiners to any change in timescales.
- 4.7 The thesis cannot be sent to the examiners until the GSAB has approved the team. Therefore it is advised that the examination arrangements form and supporting short CVs is forwarded to the committee secretary three months prior to submission.
- 4.8 If the GSAB feels there is insufficient examining experience within the team it may appoint a Chair. The role of the Chair is discussed below.
- 4.9 Candidates and supervisors must have no contact before the oral examination with any examiner on any matter relating to the thesis or the examination arrangements until the oral examination (except as necessary for practice-based research – see regulation 9.5.5).

5 Arranging the viva

- 5.1 The viva will be arranged by staff of the Graduate School, who will send the examiners the thesis and ask for possible dates. The viva schedule will be organised by the Graduate School. If the candidate wants one of the supervisory team to attend as an observer, every effort will be made to ensure the date also suits the observer but exceptionally it may be necessary to hold the viva on a day when he or she cannot attend.
- 5.2 Graduate School will provide the examiners with extracts of the regulations and guidance on the examining process at QMU. In addition, GQE will:
- Book a suitable room and arrange catering
 - Send the detailed timetable for the day to all parties
 - Arrange travel and accommodation for external examiners if required
 - Arrange visitor passes and car parking (if required)
 - Provide travel expenses and payroll forms for external examiners
 - On receipt of completed forms, arrange for financial authorisation and payment
 - Arrange for the candidate to be invoiced for the examination fee

- 5.3 Thought should be given to the best interests of the candidate, by making arrangements for appropriate tables and chairs, telephones to be switched off, the room temperature to be suitable, drinking water, tea or coffee to be provided, and a notice to be put on the door to prevent disturbance. Particular care should be taken to make any arrangements necessary for the convenience of disabled participants.
- 5.4 Candidates with disabilities are strongly advised to contact the Disabled Students Adviser prior to the viva to discuss what adjustments or special arrangements may be appropriate. The Disabled Students Adviser may liaise with the Graduate School on the student's behalf, if so requested by the student.
- 5.5 All candidates must be prepared to attend an oral examination in the University, at their own expense. Candidates absent from Scotland must therefore be prepared to return. In exceptional circumstances, such as when the external and internal examiners and the candidate are all attending a conference outside Scotland, the GSAB may be asked to allow the oral examination to be conducted elsewhere than in the University. In certain circumstances, and with the agreement of the examiners and the student, it may be appropriate to conduct the oral examination by video-conferencing.

6 Preparing for the viva

- 6.1 The examiners should be sent their copies of the thesis, and the preliminary report forms, a minimum of six weeks before any possible date for the oral examination, in order to be able to do justice to the complex task of reaching a careful initial judgement on the merits of the thesis. The oral examination should normally be held not earlier than six weeks after the date of submission, and not later than three months after submission.
- 6.2 The examiners should write their preliminary reports completely independently. The reports should be forwarded to Registry at least two working days in advance of the date of the oral examination, and should be kept fully confidential until then. The examiners should not see each other's preliminary reports until all reports have been independently submitted to Registry.
- 6.3 Where there are major adverse circumstances faced by a candidate in the period leading up to the oral examination (e.g. bereavement), at the discretion of the Convener of the GSAB such circumstances may be revealed to the examiners. However, this should only be undertaken where alternative responses to the difficulties (e.g. postponement) have been fully explored.
- 6.4 If a student discovers errors in the thesis following submission, he or she may bring them to the attention of the examiners. A list of such errors may be passed to the examiners to help them in compiling their own lists of required amendments. However material submitted after the thesis may not be regarded as replacing the submission. The examiners should still make their recommendation based on the thesis as originally submitted.

7 The examination

7.1 The formal purpose of the examination is to allow the examiners to establish that the candidate meets the requirements for a research degree:

MPhil	PhD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge that integrates most, if not all, of the main areas of the subject of study, including a critical awareness of current issues and developments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A critical and detailed knowledge at the forefront of the specialist area of study, with the ability to provide an overview of the field. • Knowledge and understanding that is generated through personal research or equivalent work which makes a significant contribution to the development of the subject/discipline.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability to identify and conceptualise new and abstract theoretical or practice-based problems and issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability to develop creative and original responses to theoretical or practice-based problems and issues.
<p>The ability to operate as an independent researcher (under guidance):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a range of specialised skills and techniques which are at or informed by forefront developments within the subject. • Plan and execute a significant project of research or development. • Practice in a wide variety of professional contexts. • Exercise substantial autonomy and initiative. • Make a contribution to change and development 	<p>The ability to operate as a fully independent researcher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use and enhance a range of complex skills and techniques at the forefront of developments within the subject. • Design and execute research or development projects to deal with new problems and issues. • Practice in the context of new problems and circumstances. • Exercise a high level of autonomy and initiative • Challenge established ideas and show initiative in shaping change and development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability to communicate effectively with peers, more senior colleagues and specialists. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability to communicate at the standard of published academic work.

7.2 Equally, where the research involves creative writing, a portfolio of creative work, or the preparation of a scholarly edition, the critical commentary on the material under discussion must be judged by the examiners to be satisfactory in the respects listed above.

7.3 Examiners will make their judgement mainly on the thesis. A strong performance at viva may allay the examiners' doubts and improve the result; a weak performance should not normally lead to a poorer result. The only exceptions would be if the candidate's answers were such as to cast doubt on the authorship of the thesis or to reveal poor research conduct (eg serious disregard for ethical procedures or misrepresentation of data).

- 7.4 The oral examination should be used to establish the extent of any collaboration, and to confirm that the work is the candidate's own. It must always be possible to track the individual work of the candidate. This may be particularly important when the outline of the project has been set by the supervisor, not the student (eg as part of a grant-funded project). For this reason, it is appropriate for the questions at viva to cover the broad field of study as well as the project itself, to explore the candidate's general understanding.
- 7.5 The examiners may also wish to offer the candidate their personal advice about possible future publication, and about possible avenues and strategies of further research.
- 7.6 The role of any supervisors attending the oral examination is to respond to potential questions from the examiners on matters of clarification. The presence of a member of the supervisory team may also be helpful in ensuring an understanding of any specific amendments recommended by the examiners and approved by the GSAB. The supervisors must on no account contribute in any way whatsoever to matters of judgement, and should not seek to intervene without invitation. If the Examination Chair is concerned that an observer is not adhering to this protocol, the Examination Chair may eject him or her from the room.
- 7.7 Oral examinations must take sufficient time for the examiners to reach confident conclusions. However a duration of longer than two hours of questioning should be exceptional. It is recommended that a break should be scheduled for around the 1 hour 30 minute point if the examination is likely to continue much beyond this time. In total a period of three hours should be sufficient for the examination proceedings, including the completion of the examiners' report and feedback to the candidate.
- 7.8 To allow candidates the opportunity of performing to their maximum potential, the oral examination should be conducted in a courteous spirit, as between fellow-professionals, avoiding unproductive confrontation. Examiners should be aware that many candidates will be initially nervous. It is therefore good practice to begin with some positive comments in the oral examination, and state what is good about the thesis. It is recommended that examiners start off with general comments and questions and / or concentrate on strengths.
- 7.9 Normally the internal examiner will chair the viva. If the internal is inexperienced, a non-voting chair will be appointed by the GSAB. The non-voting chair does not normally read the thesis and will not ask specific questions. His or her role is to run the meeting, put the candidate at ease and ensure adherence to the University's regulations and Code of Practice. The chair may, for instance, intervene to stop an inappropriate line of questioning or to clarify whether or not the observer may be asked for a comment. The Chair will also help the internal examiner complete the examiners' decision form and draw up the list of feedback to the candidate.
- 7.10 A recommended structure for the oral examination, which examiners should feel free to vary for good reason, is as follows:

Pre-examination

- examiners read each other's preliminary reports and provisional decisions
- agree the key questions for the candidate
- assign particular topics for each examiner to lead off on

The Examination chair should list the topics to be covered and tick them off during the course of the viva. It is a good idea to note possible areas for amendments as they come up.

Examination

- welcome the candidate and supervisor
- explain the intended structure and sequence of the oral
- questions and comments
- ask the candidate if he or she wants to make any further comments
- ask the candidate and supervisor to leave, temporarily
- consider the recommendation options and make the final decision

Recommendation and feedback

- ask the candidate and supervisor to return
- tell the candidate the recommendation
- remind the candidate about the process and timetable of recommendation
- explain recommended amendments to the candidate and supervisor
- discuss of publication issues and possibilities of further research
- type and sign the final agreed report

- 7.11 At any stage, the oral examination may be suspended temporarily at the request of any party for such purposes as a comfort break. However an examiner (or other designated person) should accompany the candidate at all times. Such suspensions should be no longer than 10 minutes in duration. If the candidate is unable to continue after such a period, the chair of the examination panel shall judge whether the examination should be formally terminated and whether it is appropriate for it to be reconvened at a later date.
- 7.12 At their discretion, examiners may ask the supervisor to leave the room before the candidate in order that the candidate is given an opportunity to comment on his or her supervision.
- 7.13 Examiners need to realise that the examination is of the thesis as it stands, and that it is unfair not to accept this premise. They should not allow their own vision or viewpoint to colour the questioning, and the internal examiner needs to steer the external away from asking inappropriate questions. The thesis requires to be good enough, not perfect, and as such amendments are about addressing essentials and not about trying to revise the thesis to match the examiner's vision. The key question is whether the thesis and performance at viva demonstrate that the student is ready to take on the role of unsupervised researcher. If yes, the award of PhD should be made, subject to amendments as necessary. If no, examiners should consider what the candidate would need to do to demonstrate that readiness and frame amendments accordingly.
- 7.14 The decision about whether the amendments required are "minor" or "major" is made partly on the basis of time. The candidate should be able to complete minor amendments within two months, with major amendments taking up to six months to complete. If examiners feel the amendments are minor but the individual circumstances of the candidate might prevent him or her from completing them within two months they should still recommend minor amendments, but with the recommendation that an extension to the time period be allowed by the GSAB.
- 7.15 To provide some guidance on the possible outcomes of the viva the following examples are provided:

- Minor Amendments – typographical and grammatical corrections; insert several new paragraphs in specified chapters; rework aspects of the conclusion; redraft the abstract.
 - Major Amendments – all of the above plus rework up to half of the chapters of the thesis.
 - Resubmission – all of the aspects of the minor amendments plus rework the majority of the chapters or insert new chapters into the thesis; reanalyse data.
- 7.16 The examiners must complete and agree a word processed report for the GSAB, making clear the grounds for their decision and specifying exactly what amendments are required. It is important to provide as clear advice to the candidate as possible to aid him or her with the revisions. Examiners should also bear in mind that only the amendments listed at this stage must be made: the examiner(s) cannot introduce additional requirements at a later stage.
- 7.17 There may be occasions when the examiners are unable to agree on their recommendation. In this situation the Secretary to the GSAB should be consulted for advice. In exceptional cases the examiners may prepare separate reports.
- 7.18 After the examination, the external examiner should be invited to make any comments to the Convener of the GSAB on any problematic aspects of the examination process, or to advise on any procedural changes he or she wishes to offer for the consideration of the Committee.

8 After the examination

- 8.1 The recommendation of the Board of Examiners is considered by the GSAB, which has the power in exceptional circumstances, such as failure of the examiners to agree a final report, to change the recommendation to be forwarded to Senate. Normally, the Convener of the Committee will take Convener's Action to allow the result to be formally notified to the student as soon as possible. Time limits for amendments will commence from receipt of this letter.
- 8.2 After the examination, the student should meet with the Director of Studies for a formal debriefing. If the Director of Studies was present at the examination, he or she will be able to provide feedback on the student's performance and clarify the nature of the amendments the examiners require. If another member of the supervisory team acted as observer, he or she should be present at the debriefing.
- 8.3 At the debriefing, the supervisor and student should agree the full list of amendments that require to be undertaken. If there is any doubt about what the examiners intended by a particular amendment, clarification should be sought. Students should not normally contact the examiners direct (unless the examiners invite them to do so) but can ask for clarification through the Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement.
- 8.4 For minor amendments, the student will normally complete the amendments and submit them without any further input from the supervisor.
- 8.5 For major amendments, the student may submit the amended text to the supervisor for feedback once. It is the responsibility of the student to act upon this feedback and decide whether the amendments are ready for submission.

- 8.6 When a student requires to resubmit, supervision will continue as it did before the examination. All supervisors must read and sign off the resubmitted thesis.
- 8.7 There can be no “re-negotiation” about the amendments specified following the submission of the examiners’ report and its approval by the GSAB. If a student is unhappy with an examiner’s recommendation he or she fails to make the required amendment at their own risk.
- 8.8 Minor Amendments are normally verified by the internal examiner. Candidates are advised to submit an amended thesis with a cover sheet indicating where the revised passages may be found.
- 8.9 Major amendments are normally verified by both the internal and external examiners, unless indicated otherwise in the Joint Report of the Examiners.
- 8.10 If the examiner has concerns that the amendments have not been fully completed, the Secretary to the GSAB should be consulted. Normally, the candidate will be informed and given the opportunity to make the required amendments within a period of 2 weeks. If after this the thesis does not incorporate the required amendments all examiners must view the amended thesis and discuss it. Where the amendments have been partially completed, the examiners should consider whether the thesis, as it stands, is worthy of a PhD. Should the examiners be unable to reach agreement, regulation 9.7.14 applies.
- 8.11 Once it is confirmed that the amendments have been completed satisfactorily, the GSAB should then make its formal recommendation to Senate that the candidate be awarded the degree.
- 8.12 It may be the case that the candidate is required to resubmit a substantially amended version of the thesis for re-examination. The appointment of the original examiners normally remains in force for the re-examination, the process of which follows the pattern of the first examination, except that a restricted set of final recommendations is available (see Regulation 9.8.1). A further examination fee will be charged, and external examiners will be paid a second fee.
- 8.13 If the original examiners are unavailable for any reason, paperwork should be presented to the GSAB to approve a revised examination team. The new examiner should be provided with a copy of the original examiners’ report to provide context. It should be stressed that a resubmitted thesis is likely to be so different from the original that it would have to be assessed in its entirety. Therefore the revisions suggested by the original examiners cannot be treated as an exhaustive list of issues to be addressed. In reading the revised text, it is possible that new issues will come to light. However, examiners should strive to be consistent with their earlier comments.
- 8.14 It may be the case that, following examination or re-examination, it is agreed that a PhD candidate should be awarded the alternative degree of MPhil in lieu of PhD. The candidate may be required to make suitable amendments, within a maximum of six months. The amended MPhil thesis would normally be verified by both / all examiners. The award of MPhil may not be made unless the candidate meets the criteria for the award.
- 8.15 After the decision of Senate to accept a recommendation of the GSAB that a candidate should be awarded the degree of PhD or MPhil, Registry will write formally to the candidate with full details, including graduation dates and procedures.

- 8.16 It may be the case that, following examination or re-examination, it is recommended that the candidate should be neither awarded the degree nor awarded an alternative degree. Just as the authority to award research degrees rests solely with Senate, so too does the final decision that no degree should be awarded.

Guidance for examiners

Books:

- Tinkler, P. and Jackson, C. 2004 *The doctoral examination process: a handbook for students, examiners and supervisors* Open University Press
- Pearce, L. 2005 *How to examine a thesis* Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press

Section VI – Training and Professional Development

This section covers the training needs of research students. It is recognised that students need training of different sorts at different stages of their degree, and that this training should encompass general personal development as well as the narrow needs of the research project.

1 Research Training

- 1.1 There are three levels of research training internal to QMU: the compulsory generic Research Skills Training Programme, more specific training arranged through Schools, and that provided by the supervisory team.

The Research Skills Training (RST) Programme, which is delivered centrally through CAP, has the following aims:

- to develop students' skills in retrieving, managing, analysing and assimilating information;
- to foster communication and presentation skills;
- to introduce students to a variety of research methodologies; and
- to enhance students' understanding of the importance of ethics in research.

Upon completion of the first phase of the RST Programme, which takes place during the first semester, students will be able to do the following:

- use the library effectively;
- use Reference Manager;
- explain the differences between, and the usages of, the major research families;
- explain what is meant by 'research ethics' and how to go through the process of gaining ethical approval;
- use Pebble Pad for Personal Development Planning;
- scope and define a research question;
- write a research proposal; and
- explain and present their research to a non-specialist audience.

- 1.2 It is important for all research students to complete the generic RST Programme, therefore, it is mandatory for all doctoral candidates to attend all first year doctoral study weeks. **Only in exceptional circumstances will exemptions be given.** Exemption may be allowed where the student can provide evidence of prior learning at an appropriate level. For instance, an MRes degree would qualify a student for an exemption if similar material had been covered. Such decisions are made on a case-by-case basis. Exemptions are approved by the School Academic Board.

- 1.3 The University expects research students to attain a breadth of competencies through the RST Programme and the wider experience of their supervised research study. Supervisors should ensure that a student acquires appropriate competences in the following areas:

- relevant research skills and techniques
- understanding of the research environment
- research management
- personal effectiveness

- communication skills
- networking and team working
- career management

In addition to the core RST Programme, CAP has developed a number of workshops in line with the Roberts Agenda, to ensure that students attain the above competences. There are opportunities for training in the following areas: SPSS and NVivo8, career planning, grant writing, writing for publication, designing and delivering effective presentations, and preparing for the viva.

- 1.3 The University endorses the Joint Funding Councils' Statement regarding the skills training requirements for research students across these areas, and expects training provision and supervision to support attainment of these competences.

2 Conference Attendance and Publication

- 2.1 Presentation of papers at conferences can provide an excellent opportunity for research students to rehearse the presentation and defence of their work. The appropriateness and the timing of such presentations will vary with the discipline and the nature of the programme of work (e.g. where there is pilot data which provides a meaningful basis for a preliminary report an early presentation may be appropriate; in other cases presentation may not be appropriate until all data collection and analysis is complete). In all cases, however, the student should consult with their supervisors before offering or accepting any offer of presentation of material at any meeting. While conventions vary across disciplines, the role of supervisors in supporting the work described in such presentations should normally be acknowledged.
- 2.2 Each individual student's circumstances will vary, but a normal expectation would be that a student would attend at least one conference during the course of their degree and be involved in the publication of at least one paper. However, it is important that such activities aren't allowed to distract from the over-riding priority, which is the timely production of a high quality of thesis.
- 2.3 In preparing collaborative publications before a student has been awarded a research degree, both supervisors and the student should take particular care to protect the identifiability of the student's original contribution to the work.
- 2.4 A supervisor may wish to refer to the findings of a research student under their supervision in a presentation at a meeting or symposium. In such circumstances, the specific consent of the student should be obtained and his or her contribution fully and explicitly acknowledged within the presentation.
- 2.5 The principle underlying such practice is that QMU staff are expected to give appropriate recognition to the contributions to collaborative work made by research students under their supervision. There is, in turn, a reciprocal expectation of research students that they give appropriate recognition to the contributions of their supervisors to their work. Both of these expectations continue beyond the point of award of a postgraduate degree by QMU for a programme of study.
- 2.6 These principles should be reflected in consideration of publications arising from a supervised programme of research study. Discussion between supervisors and supervised research students of the conventions of co-authorship within the early phases of the research programme is likely to protect the interests of all concerned in the collaboration. The delicacies and complexities of joint publication should not distract from the fundamental principle that prompt publication of research in refereed

journals is generally in the interests of students, supervisors and the institution that has provided the context for such work. To this end, defining a clear 'publication plan' within the course of a research programme may be useful.

3 Professional Development

- 3.1 A research degree is principally a training programme that aims to equip an individual with the skills and experience necessary to act as an independent researcher. This could lead to a range of careers: in academia, in scientific research, in business or in clinical practice.
- 3.2 In consequence, it is appropriate that supervision of a research student includes some consideration of broader professional development issues. These are potentially addressed by a number of actions. Within the context of the approved programme of work there will often be opportunities for professional networking and dissemination activity of relevance both to the project in hand, and future work in the field. Students should be encouraged to take part in research seminars or professional workshops and to develop contacts with professionals working in the discipline. For those students on bursaries, the duties performed as part of the contract can be learning opportunities. The student and supervisor should discuss how to make the School duties as relevant as possible to the student's likely future career path.
- 3.3 Non-bursary students may also be offered teaching work, if appropriate. Please note that a Disclosure Scotland certificate will need to be obtained (if not already supplied) for anyone working with taught students. All students who teach must take the Short Course in Learning, Teaching and Assessment.
- 3.4 Specific career advice may also be relevant. The University Career Advisory Service is available to all postgraduate research students (see the Student Handbook for staff and contact details). Supervisors may also be in a position to offer advice on training and employment opportunities, and should see this as part of their wider responsibility to students.
- 3.5 Students are encouraged to make use of the e-portfolio facility. This can be used both as a record of progress for the benefit of supervisors and as a record of career development. Advice is available from the Centre for Academic Practice.

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