



University of Sussex

Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes

Academic Office
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UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR RESEARCH DEGREE PROGRAMMES

Existing Awards

- 1.1 The awards that are currently available to research degree students are the **Master of Philosophy, Doctor of Philosophy** (referred to hereafter as PhD), **Doctor of Education, Doctor of Social Work and Doctor of Medicine**. The requirements and provisions outlined in this code apply to all approved research degree programmes, and apply equally to both the Master of Philosophy/PhD and to Professional Doctorates.

Requirements for the approval of new research degree programmes

- 2.1 A proposal for the establishment of a new research degree programme should be considered at School Research Degree Committee level, before being submitted to Doctoral School Committee for final approval.
- 2.2 Where a proposal for a new research degree programme would also require recognition of a new award (i.e. in addition to those listed in 1.1 above), the approval of Senate will also be required, in addition to that of Doctoral School Committee.
- 2.3 A proposal for establishment of a new research degree programme submitted to Doctoral School Committee must cover the following areas:
- *Basic details* – to include name of proposed programme, name of award, owning school and department/unit, date of first intake, whether full-time and part-time, name of programme convenor (or member of faculty who can be contacted in connection with the programme), entry requirements
 - *Rationale* – anticipated demand and target market, competition elsewhere, compatibility with wider school and university objectives/goals
 - *Staff resource* – especially whether there are sufficient faculty with the requisite expertise and experience to convene the programme, provide appropriate supervision, to act as internal examiners and to locate suitable external examiners
 - *Additional resource requirements* – e.g. in terms of technical or laboratory-based facilities/equipment and administrative support.
 - *Adequate research and social environment* – e.g. in terms of an environment where high quality research is occurring, and where there is an adequate number of peers and opportunity for discussion on related topics (internally and externally) with others actively involved in research – e.g. via seminars, conferences etc. In providing evidence, and reaching a judgement, reference should be made to Indicator 4 of the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education Research degrees.
 - *Adequate training* in appropriate methodological techniques to assist successful completion of the thesis, and training to facilitate acquisition of relevant transferable-related skills in accordance with those outlined in the Vitae Researcher Development Framework.
 - *Opportunities for suitable experience/involvement in teaching* via delivery of seminars, demonstrations and presentations etc.

Criteria for the selection of research degree students

- 3.1 In selecting research students, Schools must ensure that the following criteria are met:

Essential

- (1) A performance in a first degree or, where appropriate, in a field of educational, professional or industrial experience relevant to the research, that suggests the student could successfully complete a research programme.
- (2) An area of research within the University's expertise.
- (3) A proposed area of research which, based on the information available, is capable of being studied to the depth required to obtain the degree for which the student is registered.
- (4) A proposed area of research which, based on the information available, is capable of being completed within the timescale designated for it and for which proper supervision can be provided and maintained.
- (5) A proposed area of research for which, based on the information available, appropriate University resources (e.g. library, computing, laboratory facilities, technical assistance), an appropriate research environment, and sufficient student resources (e.g. funds to cover field trips) are available.
- (6) Satisfactory recommendations from external referees.
- (7) A level of competence in English sufficient to undertake the research satisfactorily (or a requirement to undertake the language tuition identified as necessary prior to and, where appropriate, post registration as a research student).

Recommended Good Practice

- (1) Evidence of research skills.
- (2) A satisfactory outcome at interview¹ with potential supervisor(s) and other appropriate faculty.

Supervisory responsibilities at school or departmental level

Supervisory arrangements

- 4.1 It is recognised that different models of supervision will be in place across Schools. Whatever arrangements are in place, however, Schools must ensure that the following requirements are met:
- (1) There must be a single identified point of contact both for the student and for administrative purposes. This person will be known as the 'main supervisor'.
 - (2) There must be an 'additional supervisor' able to provide advice and support when the main supervisor is not available.² Recommended practice is that there should be more than one supervisor with whom the student can expect to have regular access or contact.

¹ In the case of overseas students, this may be via a telephone call.

² E.g. this role may be performed via a joint supervisor, co-supervisor, associate supervisor or by someone drawn from within a wider supervisory team.

(3) The main supervisor must be specified to the Student Progress and Assessment Office at the time an offer is made to the student. The additional supervisor should also be specified to the Student Progress and Assessment Office at the time an offer is made to the student, or at the very latest by the end of the student's first term. Schools have responsibility for notifying the Student Progress and Assessment Office of the names of the main and additional supervisor.

(4) Main supervisors should have adequate time for uninterrupted supervision and be reliably and frequently available (or ensure that replacement supervision is available during any significant period of absence).

(5) Members of staff who have a role in supervision of research students should be suitably equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge in order to support such students effectively.

(6) In the event of loss of the main supervisor, an appropriate replacement should be found. Where there is any delay in the finding of a replacement, Schools should ensure that suitable arrangements are in place to support the student during the interim.

Number of Students

- 4.2 No supervisor should undertake as main supervisor the supervision of more than a limited number of students. The limit will vary from one subject to another and according to factors such as a supervisor's experience and other duties, but each School should have a normal maximum to be exceeded only in exceptional circumstances. A maximum number of six research students is suggested (to be exceeded only in exceptional circumstances with the agreement of the Director of Doctoral Studies and reported to Doctoral School Committee).

Frequency of Supervision

- 4.3 Schools should state clearly the character and frequency of research supervision that a student can expect with his or her supervisor(s). At minimum, there should normally be at least one formal meeting each month (or equivalent) between the supervisor and student.

Criteria for the appointment of research degree supervisors

- 5.1 In appointing research supervisors, Schools should ensure that the following criteria are met:

Essential

- (1) Supervisors should possess a research degree (normally a PhD) or equivalent experience e.g. evidence of publications.
- (2) At least one of the supervisors will have expertise in the proposed research topic.
- (3) Supervisors should be active in research. Either the main or additional supervisor should be currently engaged in research in the relevant disciplines.
- (4) Inexperienced supervisors, or probationary faculty, may co-supervise in conjunction with an experienced supervisor.

(5) Main supervisors should be permanent members of faculty or have equivalent experience and status acceptable to the Director of Doctoral Studies.

(6) Supervisors should have received training in research supervision (see sections 6 and 7 below).

Desirable

(1) Main supervisors should have experience of examining doctorates elsewhere.

Requirements relating to the training of research degree supervisors

- 6.1 All staff new to research degree supervision are required to prepare for the role by attending centrally-organised training and participating in School-determined activities or instruction.
- 6.2 Following appointment, all supervisors are expected to continue to engage in appropriate professional development activity in order to ensure that the quality of their supervision is maintained, and that they remain in touch with the latest developments relating to research degrees. The expectation is that all existing supervisors should attend a relevant refresher session (or provide evidence of other appropriate Continuing Professional Development activity) at least once every three years.
- 6.3 A record of those attending supervisory training events will be maintained by the Doctoral School and by the School as appropriate, and this will be made available to Directors of Doctoral Studies within Schools in order that attendance at relevant training events can be monitored.

Maintenance of a list of supervisors

- 7.1 The Director of Doctoral Studies within each School will manage a list of supervisors.
- 7.2 All faculty who are eligible to supervise as determined in accordance with section 5.1 above will be included on the list. The list will include details of:
- (1) the number and names of students currently supervised;
 - (2) attendance at centrally organised supervisory training sessions with an indication of the date attended;
 - (3) successful research degree completions and the academic year of completion³.

Appointment of an external supervisor in exceptional circumstances

- 8.1 In exceptional circumstances, a School may appoint an external supervisor *in addition* to the main internal supervisor. Such an appointment is subject to a formal contract and the appointee will receive a fee paid for by the School. A template formal contract can be obtained from Human Resources on request.

³ The date of completion is defined as the date upon which conferral of the award is confirmed by the relevant examination board.

- 8.2 Appointment of an external supervisor requires the approval of Doctoral School Committee.

Responsibilities of research degree students

- 9.1 The responsibilities that must be observed by research degree students are as follows:

- (1) maintaining regular contact with the main supervisor;
- (2) discussing with the supervisor/s the type of guidance and comment which will be most helpful, and agreeing upon a schedule of meetings;
- (3) taking the initiative in raising problems or difficulties, however elementary they may seem;
- (4) for the safety of themselves and others, students working in a potentially hazardous research environment must take the initiative to ensure that they are competent in any relevant research techniques to be used;
- (5) preparation of a research outline to be approved during the student's first year of study;
- (6) planning a research project which is achievable within a schedule consistent with the normal expectations of the relevant Research Council, and maintaining progress in line with that schedule;
- (7) maintaining the progress of work in accordance with the stages agreed with the main supervisor, including in particular the presentation of written material as required in sufficient time to allow for comments and discussion before proceeding to the next stage;
- (8) providing annually a brief formal report to the Director of Doctoral Studies as part of the annual review process;
- (9) deciding when he or she wishes to submit the thesis, taking due account of the supervisor/s opinion, which is however advisory only, and of the need to take account of University requirements regarding the length, format and organisation of the thesis;
- (10) taking responsibility for their own personal and professional development;
- (11) agreeing their development needs with the main supervisor at the outset of the programme, reviewing these on an annual basis, and attending any relevant development opportunities so identified;
- (12) being familiar with institutional regulations and policies that affect them, including the regulations for their qualification;
- (13) being aware of the University's Codes of Practice for Research and Intellectual Property and adhering to the requirements and observing the principles contained therein.

- 9.2 A student who considers that his or her work is not proceeding satisfactorily for reasons outside his or her control should discuss the matter with the supervisor/s

and, failing satisfaction, with the Director of Doctoral Studies concerned who will advise on any grievance procedures. In particular, the student should ask to meet the Director of Doctoral Studies if the student feels that he or she is not establishing an effective working relationship with the supervisor/s, bearing in mind that the alleged inadequacy of supervisory or other arrangements during the period of study would not constitute grounds for an appeal against the result of a research degree examination unless there were exceptional reasons for it not having come to light until after the examination, in which case it might be considered.

Responsibilities of research degree supervisors

- 10.1 The main supervisor is directly responsible in their role as supervisor to the Director of Doctoral Studies and, through that officer, to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research).
- 10.2 The main supervisor is expected to provide the student with advice at every stage in the planning and conduct of research and in the writing of the thesis and to ensure that replacement supervision is available in the event of any significant period of absence. The more specific responsibilities of the *main supervisor* are as follows:
 - (1) to complete an annual report on the student's progress for consideration within the framework of the school and/or department's annual review procedures, for later submission to the Director of Doctoral Studies;
 - (2) to provide advice and support to the student on the preparation of a suitable thesis research outline during the first year of their study, in accordance with School procedures;
 - (3) if working in a potentially hazardous research environment, ensuring and monitoring that the student possess adequate technical competence in any relevant research techniques, so that he or she presents no undue risk to themselves, others, and/or University facilities;
 - (4) giving detailed advice on the necessary completion of successive stages of work so that the whole may be submitted within the scheduled time;
 - (5) ensuring that the student is made aware of inadequacy of progress or of standards of work below that generally expected;
 - (6) identifying prospective external examiners.
- 10.3 The more general responsibilities of those involved in the student's supervision are as follows:
 - (1) to agree a schedule of regular meetings with the student, in accordance with School policy and in the light of discussion of arrangements with the student;
 - (2) being accessible to the student at other appropriate times when he or she may need advice;
 - (3) giving guidance about the nature of research and the standard expected, the planning of the research programme, literature and sources, attendance at taught classes, requisite techniques (including arranging for instruction where necessary), and the problem of plagiarism;

- (4) being familiar with the standard expected of research degree examiners, consistent with the guidance laid down by relevant Research Councils;
- (5) requesting written work as appropriate, and returning such work with constructive criticism and in reasonable time;
- (6) arranging as appropriate for the student to talk about his or her work to faculty or graduate seminars, and to be well briefed about the procedures involved in oral examinations;
- (7) providing clarification on the guidance or comment that will be offered on the student's written submissions;
- (8) ensuring that the student is aware of the University's Codes of Practice for Research and Intellectual Property and that he or she adhere to the requirements and observe the principles contained therein;
- (9) providing training in the ethical, legal and other conventions used in the conduct of research, and supporting the student in the consideration of these as appropriate⁴.
- (10) initial assessment, and ongoing review, of the student's training and skills development needs, in accordance with the Vitae Researcher Development Framework, and taking account of the training provision available at Sussex;
- (11) ensuring that the student is aware of institutional-level sources of advice, including careers guidance, health and safety legislation and equal opportunities policy;
- (12) maintaining and developing the necessary skills and expertise in order to perform all facets of the role effectively (including taking up appropriate continuing professional development opportunities)

Responsibilities of Heads of Departments or Research Convenors

11.1 The Head of Department, or where delegated, the Research Convenor, is responsible for the following functions:

- (1) The selection of research degree students (in accordance with the approved University criteria set out in section 3.1 above); the recommendation to the Director of Doctoral Studies that an offer be made to a selected research degree student.
- (2) Allocation of supervisor/s in accordance with the procedures and requirements for the appointment of research supervisors identified in section 5.1 above. (NB: A Research Convenor must undertake this function in consultation with the Head of Department). Recommendation for the appointment of supervisor/s to the Director of Doctoral Studies.
- (3) Oversight of supervisory arrangements for research degree students in the department or centre.

⁴ E.g. by providing guidance in the preparation of a risk assessment or research ethics statement in conjunction with development of a research outline during the first year of study.

(4) Liaison with the Director of Doctoral Studies over any changes of research supervisor.

(5) Organisation of departmental arrangements for the annual review of research students (in accordance with the requirements of this code specified in section 16 below).

(6) Submission of a departmental report to the Director of Doctoral Studies on the outcome of reviews conducted by the department (in accordance with any agreed School requirements and the requirements of this code specified in section 16 below).

Support during induction for research degree students

12.1 All research students offered a place are notified in advance of a programme of University and school-level induction events which are designed to inform them about, and help them settle into, their studies at the University. Prior to their attending the University, all students are provided with access to an induction handbook and dedicated website which outline the full package of support that is available during induction, as well as more general background information about the University, support services and practical advice (including a dedicated website and handbook for international students).

12.2 Schools should ensure that new research students meet, as early as possible, their supervisor/s, and the Research Convenor responsible for research students within that unit. In addition to a wider induction of students by the University (e.g. introduction to the Doctoral School, Library and the Computing Service), Schools should arrange meetings for new students presided over by Directors of Doctoral Studies (or nominees) at which students should be familiarised with *The Responsibilities of Research Degree Supervisors and Students*. A more informal social gathering should also be arranged at which current postgraduates including research students and appropriate faculty will be present. All new research students will be provided with key information relating to the requirements expected of them, and sources of support that are available, via the *Handbook for Doctoral Researchers*, school-level handbook and other relevant sources.

Ongoing support, development and guidance for research degree students

13.1 Schools should:

(1) provide guidance on the resources and facilities available to postgraduate research students and on general aspects of writing a thesis including, for example, the presentation of research outlines.

(2) provide training in research techniques and, where appropriate, in the use of the necessary apparatus.

(3) provide (or arrange for) training in skills related directly to the students research, in transferable skills⁵, and ensure that adequate guidance is given if the student becomes involved in teaching⁶.

(4) ensure that students make formal presentations of work-in-progress and are notified of opportunities to present papers at meetings.

(5) ensure that students are provided with suitable guidance on preparation for their viva examination (see section 14 below for the minimum level of support that has been approved in this area by Doctoral School Committee)

(6) make clear whom, within the department/Graduate Centre, research students should contact regarding any problems⁷, including difficulties with a supervisor, and make clear that support with more personal problems is also available via the Student Life Centre.

Support for research students in preparation for their viva examination

- 14.1 Schools will ensure that students are offered support in preparation for the viva (for example participation at a suitable workshop, offer of a mock viva or reference to relevant written guidance materials).
- 14.2 The prime locus of support in research students' preparation for the viva should be the main supervisor, with input from others involved in the student's supervision also desirable.
- 14.3 The opportunity to present and defend academic work should take place regularly and form part of Annual Review.
- 14.4 Centrally-run workshops on preparation for the viva should be available to all students.

Requirement for research degree students to produce a thesis research outline during the first year of study

- 15.1 Research degree students must prepare an outline of the thesis for consideration during the first year of their study. A certificate to confirm the content and title of the student's thesis and research outline shall be submitted to the Director of Doctoral Studies of the relevant school by the published deadline within the first year of the student's registration for a degree. It is recommended that consideration of the research outline should form part of the student's annual review process at the end of the first year, before being formally approved by the Director of Doctoral Studies.
- 15.2 Any subsequent changes in the title or research topic shall be valid only when approved by the Director of Doctoral Studies of the relevant School on the recommendation of the main supervisor.

⁵ Taking into account the opportunities available via the University's Researcher Development Programme.

⁶ Research students who become involved in teaching are required to take the Associate Tutors' Training Programme and the recommended maximum of six hours teaching per week should be exceeded only in exceptional circumstances (with the approval of the Director of Doctoral Studies on the recommendation of the main supervisor).

⁷ In many cases this may be the main supervisor, the Research Convenor or the Head of Department.

Annual Progress reports and Annual Review meetings

- 16.1 All research degree students, and their main supervisors, must complete written Annual Progress Reports. Students are entitled to see, and may challenge, the report written by their supervisor. The student may specify whether or not the supervisor may be given access to their report. In addition, a formal Annual Review meeting should be scheduled between the student and at least one other person nominated by the Director of Doctoral Studies who is *not* the main supervisor (normally someone acting in this capacity at departmental level – e.g. this could be the Research Convenor). The main supervisor may also attend with the agreement of the Director of Doctoral Studies. Following completion of the annual review process, students should emerge with a concrete idea of how their research is progressing, with definite objectives for the coming year and a timetable for achieving those objectives.
- 16.2 It is recommended practice that the reports and notes of outcomes of annual review meetings are reviewed by departmental-level groups with a good spread of supervisory experience. As well as gaining a shared update on the progress of research students within the department, this group can usefully filter the cases of students whose progress is satisfactory from those whose progress gives some cause for concern (or whose supervisory arrangements or technical support may be becoming problematic for some reason). This group would forward the bundle of reports to the Director of Doctoral Studies with a short covering report that flags the cases where progression is problematic or there are other issues requiring attention.
- 16.3 The Director of Doctoral Studies is formally responsible for approving (or not) the progression of all research students in the School. S/he may assemble a School level research degree group to assist with this process (membership of such a group does not prevent a member of faculty from subsequently acting as an internal examiner for the student/s being reviewed). The Director of Doctoral Studies is responsible for instigating appropriate follow-up action in cases where there are concerns emerging from the review process.
- 16.4 If progress is deemed to be satisfactory and that no change to the registration status is recommended, Directors of Doctoral Studies should sign the relevant annual review report and return it to the Student Progress and Assessment Office by the end of July. If the student's progress is not deemed satisfactory, their registration may be transferred from PhD to MPhil or they may be refused permission to register in the following year.

Unsatisfactory progress

- 17.1 The following procedures should be followed in the situation, where, following the annual review⁸ of a research degree student, academic progress is deemed to be unsatisfactory, and the decision is to *refuse* progression to the next year:
- (1) The departmental review group (or equivalent group within each School assigned to conduct the annual review) should produce a detailed report on the academic progress of the student, highlighting aspects that are not satisfactory, and including a recommendation to *refuse* registration in the next academic year.
- (2) The report should be forwarded to the School Research Degree Committee (RDC) – chaired by the Director of Doctoral Studies. If the School RDC accepts the

⁸ In exceptional circumstances it may be necessary to invoke these procedures outside the annual review cycle.

recommendation, it should forward the recommendation, including the departmental report and a minute of the RDC discussion and conclusion to the Student Progress and Assessment Office.

(3) The Student Progress and Assessment Office will review the papers to confirm that proper procedures have been followed and that the recommendation is not in contravention of any regulations.

(4) The Student Progress and Assessment Office will send the documents on to the Chair of Doctoral School Committee for final consideration and approval.

(5) The Chair of Doctoral School Committee will, if they agree with the recommendation, approve the refusal and formally notify the Student Progress and Assessment Office.

(6) The Student Progress and Assessment Office will notify the student of the outcome formally and at the same time inform the student of their right to appeal, and the procedure involved.

- 17.2 A student who has been refused permission to re-register and considers that the decision was based on inadequate evidence or taken in an improper manner, shall have the right to appeal against that decision by writing to the Secretary of the Appeals Board within twenty-one days of the notification of the decision.

Continuation status

- 18.1 If progress is deemed to be satisfactory and the recommendation is that the student proceed to continuation status, the relevant application form should be completed by the student and signed by the main supervisor. The form requires the Director of Doctoral Studies signature for approval before sending the form to the Student Progress and Assessment Office by the end of July.
- 18.2 The Student Progress and Assessment Office will send an application form only to those students who *have* completed *more* than the minimum period of full-time or part-time registration for their degree and who may be in a position to be writing up their thesis in the following academic year.
- 18.3 Students who *will* complete the minimum period of registration by 30 September and who wish to apply for continuation status for the following academic year may obtain a form from the Student Progress and Assessment Office. Students who wish to apply for continuation status from the following academic year are required to provide written evidence on their application forms to show that they have completed, or will have completed, all research work and will be working on writing-up the thesis. The Director of Doctoral Studies will require this information before a decision can be made on the transfer to continuation status.
- 18.4 Very substantial progress towards completion must have been made in order for continuation status to be granted. For PhD students, continuation status is not normally approved before the completion of three years full-time study or five years part-time study.

Annual evaluation and monitoring of the annual review process by Doctoral School Committee

- 19.1 Following evaluation of issues arising from the annual review of research students at School Research Degree Committees, Directors of Doctoral Studies are required to report annually to Doctoral School Committee on any major difficulties or issues that have arisen, and on any areas of innovation or development that may provide a useful example/model for other Schools to consider.

More general monitoring of progress

- 20.1 Schools will have procedures for ensuring that both student and supervisor are content with progress and whether, in the estimation of both, the work is likely to be completed in the period of the student's award.
- 20.2 As stated in sections 10.3 (1) and 4.3 above, a regular schedule of meetings should be agreed and, at minimum, there should be at least one formal meeting each month (or equivalent) between the supervisor and the student.
- 20.3 An agreed record will be kept recording the outcome of formal meetings between the student and the supervisor, and the meeting logged on the University's central system. Entries on to the system should be made at least once per term.
- 20.4 School Research and Enterprise Co-ordinators will be responsible for running reports off the system at regular intervals, at least once per term, to monitor attendance and, where a student is found not to be attending, to liaise with the Director of Doctoral Studies so that any necessary follow-up action can be determined.
- 20.5 The Director of Doctoral Studies will have responsibility for determining any necessary action to be taken where a student has been absent without a satisfactory explanation, and/or not engaging satisfactorily with their studies, including recommendation that the student should be withdrawn.

Change of registration status

- 21.1 During a student's period of registration they may request a change to their registration status such as:
- full-time to part-time
 - request for intermission
 - request to undertake fieldwork

In such situations the main supervisor should complete the relevant form and make a recommendation to the Director of Doctoral Studies.

- 21.2 The Director of Doctoral Studies may approve the request by signing the form and sending it to the Student Progress and Assessment Office. The Student Progress and Assessment Office will write to the student to confirm the change.

Research degree registration extension procedures

- 22.1 In exceptional circumstances a student may request an extension to their period of registration past their maximum period of registration⁹. They may apply for an extension of one, two or a maximum of three terms.
- 22.2 The request for an extension should be made to the Director of Doctoral Studies to whom the following information should be supplied:
- a statement setting out the reason for the request for an extension;
 - a statement of the current progress of the research and writing-up;
 - a timetable for the completion and submission of the thesis;
 - any documentary evidence in support of the request;
 - a statement of support from the student's main supervisor;
- 22.3 The Director of Doctoral Studies should complete the standard form reporting their decision to the Student Progress and Assessment Office. The Student Progress and Assessment Office will then send the student a formal letter informing them of the Director's decision.
- 22.4 Any extension granted will constitute a final period of registration. Only in exceptional circumstances will the student have a further opportunity to submit an application to the Director of Doctoral Studies.
- 22.5 If the Director does not agree to grant the student an extension, **the student will be required to withdraw on academic grounds**, that is, they will no longer be a candidate for a University of Sussex degree once the maximum period of registration has been reached.

Procedures for transfer from an MPhil to a PhD

- 23.1 A student who wishes to apply to transfer from the MPhil to PhD registration should provide a written application to the main supervisor which includes:
- A copy of written work produced so far
 - A statement of the way in which the thesis will be developed, including a timetable.
- 23.2 The main supervisor should attach a supporting statement and should then forward the application to the Head of Department or Research Convenor.
- 23.3 Recommended practice is that the application will then be considered at an internal viva examination which should be conducted by a member/s of the School other than the main supervisor. The main supervisor may also be present with the agreement of the student. The recommendation following the examination will then be passed to the Director of Doctoral Studies for approval.

⁹ The maximum period of registration for the MPhil is three years for a full-time student and four years for a part-time student; for the PhD it is four years and six years respectively; for the EdD and DSW it is six years.

- 23.4 If the recommendation is for the student to be upgraded to a PhD, the Student Progress and Assessment Office must be notified of the outcome using the standard form. The Student Progress and Assessment Office will write to the student to inform them of the outcome of the application.
- 23.5 A student who has been refused permission to change registration from MPhil to PhD or vice-versa and considers that the decision was based on inadequate evidence or taken in an improper manner, shall have the right to appeal against that decision by writing to the Secretary of the Appeals Board within twenty-one days of the notification of the decision.

Request for a change of supervisor

- 24.1 A research student may request a change in their supervisor. In such cases they should first consult with their Head of Department or Research Convenor. Where appropriate, a change of supervisor may be approved by the Director of Doctoral Studies who should complete the relevant form and return it to the Student Progress and Assessment Office. The Student Progress and Assessment Office will write to the student to confirm the change.

The examination process for research degrees

- 25.1 The thesis shall be assessed by at least one internal examiner and at least one external examiner, appointed by the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Research Degree Examination Board/Professional Doctorate Examination Board.
- 25.2 A *viva voce* examination, a practical examination or a combination of both shall normally be an integral part of the examination.
- 25.3 Supervisors may attend the *viva-voce* examination with the agreement of both the examiners **and** the candidate. The supervisor should only contribute, at the *viva voce* examination, if addressed by the examiners.
- 25.4 Where it is School level policy, or where there are particular circumstances that warrant it, an independent chair may be employed at a *viva-voce* examination. Where this is the case, the student will be informed in advance.
- 25.5 Attendance of anyone additional at a *viva-voce* examination as an observer must be approved by the Director of Doctoral Studies and must be on the condition that they play no part in the examination. The consent of the candidate must be obtained, and the rationale for the person attending must be made explicit to all present at the examination and confirmed at the outset of the viva.
- 25.6 Examiners will complete an independent report (Report Form I) on the candidate's thesis before discussion with their fellow examiner prior to the *viva-voce* examination. On completion of the *viva-voce* examination, the examiners will then complete a joint report form (Report Form II) which reports on the performance of the candidate and their recommended award outcome.
- 25.7 The recommendation of the examiners is subject to consideration by the Research Degree Examination Board/Professional Doctorate Examination Board and ratification by Senate. More detailed guidance on the examination process for examiners of research degrees is provided in the *Instructions to Examiners* document.

Criteria for the appointment of research degree examiners

26.1 The following criteria must be observed by Schools in the appointment of research degree examiners:

- (1) Each research degree examination must be conducted by at least one internal examiner and one external examiner.
- (2) Examiners should have appropriate levels of expertise in the relevant research area.
- (3) Examiners should be active in research.
- (4) Examiners should possess a research degree **OR** equivalent experience.
- (5) Examiners should normally have experience in research degree examination. Directors of Doctoral Studies are asked to indicate, on the appointment form, whether the proposed internal examiner has conducted a research degree examination before, and if not, what measures have been taken to ensure that the new examiner has been adequately briefed. Directors of Doctoral Studies and Heads of Department must ensure that potential internal examiners are adequately prepared for this role.¹⁰
- (6) The internal examiner would normally have a contract of employment, or an appointment, or an appropriate association with the University, or an academic unit, in order to qualify as 'internal'. The Chair or Vice-Chair of the Research Degree Examination Board/Professional Doctorate Examination Board will have the authority to decide who qualifies as an 'internal' examiner within these broad criteria.
- (7) Former members of staff or former students of the University should not be invited to become external examiners until at least five years after their staff appointment has ceased, or the award of their degree, as appropriate.
- (8) A main or joint supervisor may not be appointed as an internal examiner.
- (9) Additional examiners may be appointed in appropriate circumstances, including:
 - where the topic of the thesis is such that it cannot be adequately covered by a single internal or external examiner;
 - where the most appropriate internal or external examiner cannot be guaranteed to be available for the whole period of the examination, taking into account the possibility of a requirement for resubmission;
 - where the internal examiner is inexperienced (see 5 above);
- (10) Examiners will be asked to declare, on the acceptance form, whether there is any personal relationship between themselves and the candidate, or the other examiner, or the supervisor, or other relevant parties within the academic unit, which might be interpreted as being prejudicial to the outcome.

¹⁰ Measures by which this might be achieved include a combination of the following: briefing from colleagues experienced in examination, participation in 'mock vivas', observation of vivas, attendance at relevant University workshops or national training events, reference to relevant disciplinary guidance documents and appointment of a third examiner (i.e. a second internal where one of the internals is inexperienced).

Collusion, plagiarism and misconduct

- 27.1 It shall be an offence for any student to be guilty of, or party to, collusion, plagiarism or any other form of misconduct in an examination or work which is submitted for assessment.
- 27.2 Allegations or complaints of misconduct committed by research students will be investigated by the appropriate authority, depending on the time and nature of the allegation.
- 27.3 Where a student is found guilty of misconduct, a range of penalties may be applied including disqualification from eligibility for the award of the degree for the most serious offences.

Complaints and appeals procedures

- 28.1 The generic University of Sussex complaints procedures, and the main grounds for complaint, are outlined in the *Handbook for Doctoral Researchers*.
- 28.2 A research student may appeal against a decision of their examiners that they should fail their examination under the relevant regulations. They may also appeal against a decision that they be refused permission to re-register, that they be required to withdraw, or that they be refused permission to transfer from MPhil to PhD or vice-versa. More detailed information, including the admissible grounds for appeal, is set out within the relevant sections of the *Ordinances and Regulations* relating to research degrees and within the *Appeals Procedures*.

Representation and feedback from research degree students

- 29.1 Both the Doctoral School Committee, and school-level Research Degree Committees or equivalent forums, should include research degree student representative/s.
- 29.2 The principal mechanisms for obtaining feedback from research students are:
- informally, via the supervisor/s, research convenor or relevant others within the School;
 - via the process of annual review of the student's progress.
- 29.3 In addition, there should be specific mechanisms in place to obtain feedback with respect to the following:
- the individual taught courses comprising professional doctorates;
 - where research students are employed as Associate Tutors (ATs), their experience as ATs.