



**Regulations and code of practice for  
research degree programmes**

**2023/24**

# Regulations and code of practice for research degree programmes

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# Introduction

This introductory section provides an overview of the purpose of the Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes and of the University senior roles related to its operation.

## Purpose

1. The Code of Practice provides the institutional framework for all postgraduate research (PGR) degrees delivered by the University of Bristol. Its purpose is to define the rules covering PGR study and to maintain the academic standards of research degrees.
2. The Code of Practice is updated annually and only the current version has regulatory status and supersedes all previous versions.
3. The Code of Practice forms part of the Academic Regulations prescribed by Senate. It is also cited in the Student Agreement and forms part of the terms of that agreement for PGR students.
4. The Code of Practice covers the academic aspects of PGR study. Other regulations, rules, and policies outside of this Code of Practice also apply to PGR students where relevant.
5. The Code of Practice aligns with the relevant expectations in the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) [Quality Code](#) and research degrees are aligned with the [Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies](#). As such, University of Bristol research degrees are recognised as having Europe-wide equivalence (see the [Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area](#)).
6. The Code of Practice comprises regulations and policies covering the academic aspects of PGR study and the awarding of research degrees. It also includes links to related guidance, as well as references to other Codes of Practice and to other policies where this is relevant.
7. Regulations in this Code of Practice provide general rules covering the minimum requirements and responsibilities in relation to the academic aspects of PGR study and to the awarding of research degrees. These regulations must be followed.
8. Policies in this Code of Practice mandate how specified areas of activity linked to the academic aspects of PGR study are managed.
9. The Code or Practice is for use by:
  - a. Faculty and School PGR Directors,
  - b. Supervisors of PGR students,
  - c. PGR students,
  - d. Examiners of PGR students, and
  - e. Other University staff who are involved in PGR provision.

## Roles

10. There are a range of senior role holders who have responsibilities in relation to the Code of Practice. These role holders can delegate part of their function on an individual basis where there is, for example, a potential conflict of interest. They can also delegate their authority, in whole or in part, for an extended period.
11. The Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (PGR) has academic leadership of the PGR environment across the University and reports to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research).
12. The Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education Quality and Standards) has academic leadership of the quality and standards of education, including for PGR provision, across the University and reports to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students).
13. A Faculty PGR Director is appointed for each faculty. They are directly responsible to the Dean of the faculty and accountable to the Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (PGR) for providing academic leadership in their faculty on PGR matters.
14. A School PGR Director (or Co-Directors) is appointed for each school. They are directly responsible to the Head of School and accountable to the Faculty PGR Director for providing academic leadership in their school on PGR matters. The functions of this role may be assigned to several individuals within the school, but a formal School PGR Director (or Co-Directors) is required to provide direction on school-level PGR activities.

## Summary of changes

This section summarises the changes made to the Code of Practice for 2023/24.

1. Rewrite of the Code of Practice. New text and a new structure for the Code aims to improve accessibility for staff and PGR students. The changes are presentational and there is consistency of meaning with the old version of the Code. The rewritten version was published on 8 April 2024 and supersedes the previous 2023/24 version.
2. Corrections for doctoral degrees by published work (2.22 and 21.10). Update to clarify that examiners can only require corrections to the commentary and not to the publications.
3. Doctoral degrees by published work (2.5). An expanded eligibility criteria for doctoral degrees by published work opens this option up to a wider range of staff, including honorary and professional services staff. The length of service before staff can apply has also been reduced from three to two years.
4. Students registered on two programmes (3.16). The allowance for doctoral students to be registered for a research master's degree at the same time if they have submitted their research master's dissertation has been extended to cover taught masters as well.
5. Part-time periods of study (4.13). Existing part-time PGR students were permitted to move to a fully pro-rata period of study alongside new entrants from 19 September 2022 onwards, but they had to make the request by 31 July 2023. An allowance permits any part-time students who were on suspension during 2022/23, and so were not able to meet the July deadline, to make a request within two months of their return from suspension.
6. Suspensions for jury service (4.27). Jury service has been explicitly included as a reason for requesting a suspension.
7. Student entitlements for maternity, adoption, and partner/other parent leave (6.18 to 6.31). These student entitlements have moved to regulation from a previous policy that was mostly focused on funding matters.
8. Attendance requirements and monitoring (7.12 to 7.17 and 10.10 to 10.11). Changes to the attendance requirement and to formal supervisory meetings respond to relevant policy and other obligations, such as the Policy for Student Engagement and Attendance and the rules for student visas.
9. Co-supervision and partnerships (9.14 to 9.16). An update to expand the rules for supervision for joint and dual degrees to cover supervisory arrangements with other partnership arrangements as well.
10. Submission of the dissertation (17.7). An allowance for PGR students to send in a new electronic file of their submitted dissertation if there are technical or presentational issues has been added.
11. Dissertation length for the MScR in the Faculty of Arts (17.8). The word count for the MScR in Arts has been changed so that it is the same as the faculty's MPhil word count.

12. Policy on academic misconduct for PGR examinations and awards. An update clarifies that where there is minor reference problems identified in a Turnitin check, the formal process in this policy must still be followed. The nominated reviewer cannot ask the student to make changes outside of the formal process. A clarification has also been added to say that the nominated Turnitin reviewer must be independent of the student and of the examination.
  
13. Policy for research degrees by distance learning. The policy has been refreshed with a streamlined approval process and a reduction in the number of compulsory visits to the University.

## B. PGR programmes, registration, and the period of study

### 1. PGR programmes

This section lists the PGR degree programmes governed by the regulations and code of practice for research degree programmes and set out any additional regulations for specific degrees.

In this section:

- PGR degree programmes
- Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
- Engineering Doctorate (EngD)
- Doctor of Medicine (MD)
- Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS)
- Doctor of Educational Psychology (DEdPsy)
- Doctor of Education (EdD)
- Research master's degrees

#### **PGR degree programmes**

1.1. The regulations and code of practice for research degrees apply to the following degrees.

1.2. Doctoral degrees

1.2.1. Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in all faculties.

1.2.2. Engineering Doctorate (EngD) in the Faculty of Engineering.

1.2.3. Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS) in the Faculty of Health Sciences.

1.2.4. Doctor of Medicine (MD) in the Faculty of Health Sciences and the Faculty of Life Sciences.

1.2.5. Doctor of Education (EdD) in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law.

1.2.6. Doctor of Educational Psychology (DEdPsy) in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law.

1.3. Research master's degrees

1.3.1. Master of Music (MMus) in the Faculty of Arts.

1.3.2. Master of Philosophy (MPhil) in the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law.

1.3.3. Master of Science by Research (MScR) in all faculties.

1.4. There are additional regulations that cover specific research degrees set out in this section.



- 1.5. [PGR degrees with musical composition](#) are covered by separate additional regulations.
- 1.6. [Doctoral degrees by published works](#) are covered by separate additional regulations.
- 1.7. PGR students in relevant situations are also subject to the following policies:
  - 1.7.1. [Policy for research degrees by distance learning](#).
  - 1.7.2. [Policy on PGR placements](#).
  - 1.7.3. [Policy on PGR students who teach](#).

### **Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)**

- 1.8. The additional regulations for a PhD by dissertation are specified here.
- 1.9. A [PhD by published work](#) is covered by separate additional regulations.
- 1.10. A [PhD with musical composition](#) is covered by separate additional regulations.

#### *Requirements for a PhD award*

- 1.11. A student must fulfil the relevant doctoral [award criteria](#) to obtain a PhD degree.
- 1.12. A student who is registered on a PhD programme that contains mandatory credit-bearing taught units must also fulfil the requirements of the taught component. The student is subject to the [regulations and code of practice for taught programmes](#) and to the relevant programme specification for the assessment of any taught component.
- 1.13. PhD students must satisfy any other formal requirements set by the faculty or by a sponsor, which can include satisfactory performance in any prescribed work.

#### *Funded full-time PhD students*

- 1.14. A full-time PhD student who is funded by an official sponsor can have up to an extra year added to their maximum period of study in the following circumstances:
  - 1.14.1. They started before 24 September 2018 and the additional time was agreed as part of their registration.
  - 1.14.2. They started on or after 24 September 2018 and they registered as part of a doctoral training entity on an PhD programme that was set up before this date and where the additional time was agreed when the programme was set up.
- 1.15. Doctoral training entities that were formed on or after 24 September 2018, including those that have been re-established following a re-bidding process, are not permitted to extend the standard maximum period of study.

### *Taught exit awards*

1.16. A student registered on a PhD with an integrated taught component, who has obtained the necessary credit points, might be eligible for a taught exit award in the following circumstances:

1.16.1. They decide to leave before completing the PhD programme.

1.16.2. They fail in the examination of their dissertation.

1.16.3. They are required to withdraw following, for example, a Registration Review Panel.

1.17. To be eligible for the exit award of a taught masters, a postgraduate diploma, or a postgraduate certificate, a student must meet the requirements in the programme specification, the University's credit framework and in the regulations and code of practice for taught degrees.

### **Engineering Doctorate (EngD)**

1.18. The additional regulations for an EngD are specified here.

1.19. An [EngD by published work](#) is covered by separate additional regulations.

### *Requirements for an EngD award*

1.20. An EngD programme contains a taught component and a research component.

1.21. A student must fulfil the following requirements to be awarded an EngD degree:

1.21.1. Successfully complete the taught component. The student is subject to the [regulations and code of practice for taught programmes](#) and to the relevant programme specification for the assessment of the taught component.

1.21.2. Fulfil the relevant doctoral [award criteria](#) in the examination of the dissertation in the research component. In addition, an EngD student must demonstrate an appreciation of the industrial context and significance of the research in their dissertation.

### *Funded full-time EngD students*

1.22. A full-time EngD student who is funded by an official sponsor can have up to an extra year added to their maximum period of study in the following circumstances:

1.22.1. They started before 24 September 2018 and the additional time was agreed as part of their registration.

1.22.2. They started on or after 24 September 2018 and they registered as part of a doctoral training entity on an EngD programme that was set up before this date and where the additional time was agreed when the programme was set up.

- 1.23. Doctoral training entities that were formed on or after 24 September 2018, including those that have been re-established following a re-bidding process, are not permitted to extend the standard maximum period of study.

#### *Taught exit awards*

- 1.24. An EngD student who has obtained the necessary credit points might be eligible for a taught exit award in the following circumstances:
  - 1.24.1. They decide to leave before completing the EngD programme.
  - 1.24.2. They fail in the examination of their dissertation.
  - 1.24.3. They are required to withdraw following, for example, a Registration Review Panel.
- 1.25. To be eligible for the exit award of a taught masters, a postgraduate diploma, or a postgraduate certificate, a student must meet the requirements in the programme specification, the University's credit framework and in the regulations and code of practice for taught degrees.

#### **Doctor of Medicine (MD)**

- 1.26. The additional regulations for an MD are specified here.
- 1.27. An [MD by published work](#) is covered by separate additional regulations.

#### *Requirements for an MD award*

- 1.28. A student must fulfil the relevant doctoral [award criteria](#) to obtain an MD degree. In addition, an MD student must demonstrate their contribution to the advancement of medical knowledge in their dissertation.

#### *Eligibility*

- 1.29. Individuals are eligible to apply to register for an MD if they graduated at least two years ago with a Bachelors of Medicine and Surgery from a UK university or with an equivalent degree from an overseas university.
- 1.30. An individual must also satisfy at least one of the following criteria:
  - 1.30.1. They have previous research experience.
  - 1.30.2. They have evidence of publication in a related field.
  - 1.30.3. They have evidence of contributing to successful research funding proposal/s.

#### **Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS)**

- 1.31. The additional regulations for a DDS are specified here.

#### *Requirements for a DDS award*

- 1.32. A DDS programme contains a taught component and a research component.

- 1.33. A student must fulfil the following requirements to be awarded a DDS degree:
- 1.33.1. Obtain at least 180 credit points in taught modules at level M, followed by at least 360 credit points of study at level D comprising research and clinical practice.
  - 1.33.2. Successfully complete the taught component, including satisfactory completion of clinical assessments and/or placements. The student is subject to the [regulations and code of practice for taught programmes](#) and to the relevant programme specification for the assessment of the taught component.
  - 1.33.3. Pass a clinically focussed examination in Dental Surgery. If the student has a higher clinical dental qualification or is listed on the General Dental Council's Specialist Register, the examiners can exempt the student from the clinical examination.
  - 1.33.4. Fulfil the relevant doctoral [award criteria](#) in the examination of the dissertation in the research component.
- 1.34. A DDS student who fails to achieve satisfactory performance in the assessment of clinical skills will normally be withdrawn from the programme.

#### *Eligibility*

- 1.35. Individuals are eligible to apply to register for a DDS if they passed the final examination for a Bachelors of Dental Surgery at least two years ago.

#### *Taught exit awards*

- 1.36. A DDS student who has obtained the necessary credit points might be eligible for a taught exit award in the following circumstances:
- 1.36.1. They decide to leave before completing the DDS programme.
  - 1.36.2. They transfer to a lower-level award.
  - 1.36.3. They fail in the examination of their dissertation.
  - 1.36.4. They are required to withdraw following, for example, a Registration Review Panel.
- 1.37. To be eligible for the exit award of a taught masters or a postgraduate diploma, a student must meet the requirements in the programme specification, the University's credit framework and in the regulations and code of practice for taught degrees.

#### **Doctor of Educational Psychology (DEdPsy)**

- 1.38. The additional regulations for a DEdPsy are specified here.

### *Requirements for a DEdPsy award*

- 1.39. A DEdPsy programme contains a taught component and a research component.
- 1.40. A student must fulfil the following requirements to be awarded a DEdPsy degree:
  - 1.40.1. Successfully complete the taught component. The student is subject to the [regulations and code of practice for taught programmes](#) and to the relevant programme specification for the assessment of the taught component.
  - 1.40.2. Successfully complete the required fieldwork placements.
  - 1.40.3. Fulfil the relevant doctoral [award criteria](#) in the examination of the dissertation in the research component.
- 1.41. Successful DEdPsy students must also be deemed to have achieved personal, academic, and professional competence as specified in the British Psychological Society core curriculum and the Health and Care Professions Council standards of proficiency.

### *Placements*

- 1.42. A DEdPsy student must successfully complete the required fieldwork placements, as follows:
  - 1.42.1. In year 1: three placements.
  - 1.42.2. In year 3: undertake required placement learning for three days a week.
- 1.43. Placements are assessed as follows:
  - 1.43.1. Professional practice portfolio.
  - 1.43.2. Self-assessment profiles.
  - 1.43.3. Summary reports provided by fieldwork supervisors.
  - 1.43.4. Completion of a 4,000-word assignment or equivalent for each practice-based unit.

### *Progression to the research component*

- 1.44. A DEdPsy student must fulfil the following criteria to progress to the research component:
  - 1.44.1. Pass the taught component and the required fieldwork placements.
  - 1.44.2. Successfully complete any designated pre-requisites as preparation for the research component and dissertation.
  - 1.44.3. Submit a research proposal, which must be approved by the school. When considering the proposal, the school must consider the feasibility of the

study and the student's ability to complete the dissertation within the time permitted.

1.44.4. Obtain any ethical approval required for the research.

#### *Annual progress monitoring*

1.45. A DEdPsy student is only required to participate in annual progress monitoring when they have progressed to the research component.

#### *Taught exit awards*

1.46. A DEdPsy student who has obtained the necessary credit points might be eligible for a taught exit award in the following circumstances:

1.46.1. They decide to leave before completing the DEdPsy programme.

1.46.2. They transfer to a lower-level award.

1.46.3. They fail in the examination of their dissertation.

1.46.4. They are required to withdraw following, for example, a Registration Review Panel.

1.47. To be eligible for the exit award of a taught masters, a postgraduate diploma or a postgraduate certificate, a student must meet the requirements in the programme specification, the University's credit framework and in the regulations and code of practice for taught degrees.

### **Doctor of Education (EdD)**

1.48. The additional regulations for an EdD are specified here.

#### *Requirements for a EdD award*

1.49. An EdD programme contains a taught component and a research component.

1.50. A student must fulfil the following requirements to be awarded an EdD degree:

1.50.1. Successfully complete the taught component. The student is subject to the [regulations and code of practice for taught programmes](#) and to the relevant programme specification for the assessment of the taught component.

1.50.2. Fulfil the relevant doctoral [award criteria](#) in the examination of the dissertation in the research component.

1.51. The taught component must normally be completed within two years for full-time students (pro-rata equivalent for part-time students), subject to unit availability. Students who do not conform with this timeframe may have to exit with a lower award.

### *Recognition of prior learning*

- 1.52. An EdD student who has obtained a Master of Science or equivalent degree can apply for recognition of prior learning to cover up to 100 credit points of the taught component.
- 1.53. An exemption from part the taught component because of the recognition of prior learning is only relevant if the student goes on to be awarded the EdD degree. Recognition of prior learning is not permitted for taught exit awards.

### *Progression to the research component*

- 1.54. An EdD student must fulfil the following criteria to progress to the research component:
  - 1.54.1. Pass the taught component. 100 credit points must be gained by achieving the pass mark at the first attempt.
  - 1.54.2. Successfully complete any designated pre-requisites as preparation for the research component and dissertation.
  - 1.54.3. Submit a research proposal, which must be approved by the school. When considering the proposal, the school must consider the feasibility of the study and the student's ability to complete the dissertation within the time permitted.
  - 1.54.4. Obtain any ethical approval required for the research.

### *Annual progress monitoring*

- 1.55. An EdD student is only required to participate in annual progress monitoring when they have progressed to the research component.

### *Taught exit awards*

- 1.56. An EdD student who has obtained the necessary credit points might be eligible for a taught exit award in the following circumstances:
  - 1.56.1. They decide to leave before completing the EdD programme.
  - 1.56.2. They transfer to a lower-level award.
  - 1.56.3. They fail in the examination of their dissertation.
  - 1.56.4. They are required to withdraw following, for example, a Registration Review Panel.
- 1.57. To be eligible for the exit award of a taught masters, a postgraduate diploma or a postgraduate certificate, a student must meet the requirements in the programme specification, the University's credit framework and in the regulations and code of practice for taught degrees.

## **Research master's degrees**

- 1.58. The additional regulations for the Master of Philosophy (MPhil) and the Master of Science by Research (MScR) are specified here.
- 1.59. The Master of Music (MMus) and the MPhil in Musical Composition are covered by [separate additional regulations](#).

### *Requirements for a research master's award*

- 1.60. A student must fulfil the relevant [award criteria](#) to obtain a research master's degree.
- 1.61. Students registered for a research master's degree must satisfy any other formal requirements set by the faculty or by a sponsor, which can include satisfactory performance in any prescribed work.



## PGR degrees with musical composition

The regulations in this section cover the additional regulations for PGR degrees that involve musical composition.

In this section:

- PGR degrees and musical composition
- PhD with musical composition
- MMus
- MPhil in musical composition

### PGR degrees and musical composition

1.62. The following PGR degrees can be studied with musical composition:

1.62.1. Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in musical composition or in a combination of musicology and composition.

1.62.2. Master of Music (MMus).

1.62.3. Master of Philosophy (MPhil) in musical composition.

### PhD with musical composition

1.63. The additional regulations for a PhD that includes musical composition are specified here.

1.64. A music PhD can be in musicology (covering music theory and analysis), in musical composition, or in a combination of both. A PhD solely in musicology is covered by the standard [additional regulations](#) for the PhD by dissertation.

#### *PhD in musical composition*

1.65. A student can register directly on to a PhD in musical composition. A student registered on a relevant research master's degree can transfer to the PhD subject to satisfactory progress.

1.66. A student must fulfil the relevant doctoral [award criteria](#) to obtain a PhD degree.

1.67. For examination, the student must submit a portfolio of compositions and a commentary on the portfolio.

1.68. The portfolio of compositions must fulfil the following requirements:

1.68.1. There must normally be between five and seven compositions totalling around 75 to 120 minutes of music.

1.68.2. The compositions must be for a variety of forces, of which at least one must be substantial in both medium and design.

1.68.3. All or most of the pieces must have been performed and recordings should be included with the submitted scores.

- 1.68.4. Electronic and mixed media work of equivalent merit and extent are equally permissible.
- 1.69. The commentary must fulfil the following requirements:
  - 1.69.1. It must provide an analytical/contextual commentary on the portfolio of compositions.
  - 1.69.2. It must provide an intellectually rigorous account of the student's creative landmarks and the nature of their contribution to contemporary composition.
  - 1.69.3. It must explain issues of importance to the student (such as constructional, cross-cultural, technological, and sociological) and demonstrate their awareness of the broader context in which the work is situated.
  - 1.69.4. It must be around 15,000 words excluding references, appendices and lists of contents.
  - 1.69.5. It must be appropriately referenced and contain a bibliography that includes a list of repertoire studied (scores and other media).

*Combined PhD in musicology and composition*

- 1.70. A student can register directly on to a PhD that combines musicology and composition. A student registered on a relevant research master's degree can transfer to the PhD subject to satisfactory progress.
- 1.71. For a combined PhD, the student must integrate the musicological and compositional elements in to a single, coherent project.
- 1.72. For examination, the student must submit three components:
  - 1.72.1. A dissertation.
  - 1.72.2. A portfolio of compositions.
  - 1.72.3. An analytical/contextual commentary on the compositions.
- 1.73. The Department of Music, with approval provided by the Faculty PGR Director, will determine the length of each component depending on the student's project.
- 1.74. The length of the components should be proportionate to those required for a purely musicological or a purely compositional PhD. Those standard lengths are as follows:
  - 1.74.1. A purely musicological PhD dissertation has a maximum word count of 80,000 excluding references, appendices and lists of contents.
  - 1.74.2. A purely compositional PhD requires five to seven compositions totalling 75-120 minutes of music and a commentary of around 15,000 words.

- 1.75. Two examples are provided to indicate how lengths of each component should be calculated:
- 1.75.1. A PhD project combining musicology and composition in equal parts would require a dissertation of no more than 40,000 words, a portfolio totalling 40-60 minutes of music, and a commentary of around 7,500 words.
  - 1.75.2. A PhD project consisting of two-thirds musicology and one-third composition would require a dissertation of no more than 55,000 words, a portfolio totalling 25-40 minutes of music, and a commentary of around 5,000 words.
- 1.76. For a combined PhD, the student can integrate the commentary within the dissertation, but the student must ensure that they refer clearly to the portfolio of compositions. Where the dissertation and commentary are integrated, the overall word limit will be the combined total of those two components.

## **MMus**

- 1.77. The additional regulations for an MMus are specified here.
- 1.78. A student must fulfil the relevant [award criteria](#) to obtain an MMus degree.
- 1.79. For examination, the student must submit a portfolio of compositions and a commentary on the portfolio.
- 1.80. The portfolio of compositions must fulfil the following requirements:
- 1.80.1. There must normally be four or five compositions totalling around 50 – 70 minutes of music.
  - 1.80.2. The compositions must be for a variety of forces.
  - 1.80.3. A proportion of the portfolio must have been performed and recordings should be included with the submitted scores.
  - 1.80.4. Electronic and mixed media work of equivalent merit and extent are equally permissible.
- 1.81. The commentary must fulfil the following requirements:
- 1.81.1. It must provide an analytical/contextual commentary on the portfolio of compositions.
  - 1.81.2. It must provide an intellectually rigorous account of the student's creative landmarks and the nature of their contribution to contemporary composition.
  - 1.81.3. It must explain issues of importance to the student (such as constructional, cross-cultural, technological, and sociological) and demonstrate their awareness of the broader context in which the work is situated.

1.81.4. It must be around 8,000 to 10,000 words excluding references, appendices and lists of contents.

1.81.5. It must be appropriately referenced and contain a bibliography that includes a list of repertoire studied (scores and other media).

### **MPhil in musical composition**

1.82. The additional regulations for an MPhil in musical composition are specified here.

1.83. A student must fulfil the relevant [award criteria](#) to obtain an MPhil degree.

1.84. For examination, the student must submit a portfolio of compositions and a commentary on the portfolio.

1.85. The portfolio of compositions must fulfil the following requirements:

1.85.1. There must normally be two or three compositions totalling around 25 – 35 minutes of music.

1.85.2. The compositions must be for a variety of forces.

1.85.3. A proportion of the portfolio must have been performed and recordings should be included with the submitted scores.

1.85.4. Electronic and mixed media work of equivalent merit and extent are equally permissible.

1.86. The commentary must fulfil the following requirements:

1.86.1. It must provide an analytical/contextual commentary on the portfolio of compositions.

1.86.2. It must provide an intellectually rigorous account of the student's creative landmarks and the nature of their contribution to contemporary composition.

1.86.3. It must explain issues of importance to the student (such as constructional, cross-cultural, technological, and sociological) and demonstrate their awareness of the broader context in which the work is situated.

1.86.4. It must be around 4,000 to 5,000 words excluding references, appendices and lists of contents.

1.86.5. It must be appropriately referenced and contain a bibliography that includes a list of repertoire studied (scores and other media).

## 2. Doctoral degrees by published work

The regulations in this section cover the additional regulations for doctoral degrees by published work.

In this section:

- Doctoral degrees by published work
- Eligibility
- Application
- Registration
- Support
- Duration
- Submission
- Examination

### Doctoral degrees by published work

- 2.1. The additional regulations for a doctoral degree by published work are specified here.
- 2.2. A doctoral degree by published work relies on publications completed before registration.
- 2.3. A student studying for a doctoral degree by published work must fulfil the relevant doctoral [award criteria](#) to obtain their degree.
- 2.4. The following doctoral degrees are open for registration by published work:
  - 2.4.1. Doctor of Philosophy (PhD).
  - 2.4.2. Engineering Doctorate (EngD).
  - 2.4.3. Doctor of Medicine (MD).

### Eligibility

- 2.5. Individuals who meet one of the following criteria can apply to register for a doctoral degree by published work:
  - 2.5.1. A member of staff who has a contract of employment with the University of Bristol, in either an academic or professional services role, and who has been employed by the University for at least two continuous years.
  - 2.5.2. An honorary member of staff of the University of Bristol who has held this status for at least two continuous years.
  - 2.5.3. A graduate of the University of Bristol who was awarded their degree at least six years ago.
- 2.6. In exceptional circumstances, the Faculty PGR Director can consider an applicant who does not fully meet a minimum period in the eligibility criteria.

## Application

- 2.7. An applicant who meets the eligibility criteria must show that their published work meets the following thresholds:
  - 2.7.1. The publications must relate in a coherent way to the field of knowledge and represent a significant and original contribution.
  - 2.7.2. The publications must contribute to research at a level and scope equivalent to the relevant doctorate by dissertation route.
  - 2.7.3. The publications must show evidence of the applicant's ability to pursue independently original research based on a good understanding of the relevant techniques and concepts.
- 2.8. When applying, an applicant must provide the following:
  - 2.8.1. A synopsis of approximately 500 words, outlining the extent, range, quality, and coherence of the work to be submitted.
  - 2.8.2. A statement confirming the applicant's substantial contribution to any publications that have been co-authored.
  - 2.8.3. A declaration that the applicant has not submitted any of the publications for any other award.
  - 2.8.4. A list of publications that the applicant intends to submit.
  - 2.8.5. A curriculum vitae, which must include details of the applicant's employment or honorary status at the University of Bristol where relevant.
- 2.9. The Faculty PGR Director will decide whether the applicant can register for a doctoral degree by published work. The Faculty PGR Director's decision will be based the following:
  - 2.9.1. Does the applicant meet the eligibility criteria?
  - 2.9.2. Is there sufficient appropriate material to indicate that the applicant has a reasonable chance of being awarded a doctorate? It will not be possible to form a judgement unless there is a considerable amount of published work that would typically be expected for the discipline.
  - 2.9.3. Does the work relate in a coherent way to a field of knowledge? The works can range over different topics, but they must cohere.
  - 2.9.4. Is there extensive treatment of the topics covered? Greater weight will be attached to a small number of substantial publications rather than to a larger number of brief notes.
  - 2.9.5. Has the work been produced at an appropriate rate relevant to the circumstances in which the research was conducted?

- 2.9.6. Has the applicant clearly identified their substantial contribution to any co-authored works?
- 2.9.7. For an EngD by published work, do the publications indicate an appreciation of the industrial context and significance of the research?
- 2.9.8. For an MD by published work, do the publications indicate a contribution to the advancement of medical knowledge?

### **Registration**

- 2.10. If the Faculty PGR Director decides that the applicant can register for a doctoral degree by published work, the applicant must pay the relevant registration and submission fee as part of their registration as a student.
- 2.11. A student who is permitted to register for a doctoral degree by published work must not assume that this will automatically result in a doctoral award, as they must pass an examination in the same way as any other doctoral student.

### **Support**

- 2.12. The Head of School (or nominee) must appoint an appropriate advisor to support and guide the student during the preparation of their work for submission. The advisor must be a senior academic at the University who is familiar with the standard required and with the student's field of work.
- 2.13. The Head of School (or nominee) must ensure that the advisor has appropriate knowledge and skills and has the time to carry out their advisory duties.

### **Duration**

- 2.14. The student must submit for examination within one year of their registration. In exceptional circumstances, the Faculty PGR Director can extend the registration period.
- 2.15. The registered period does not equate to full-time study, as no new substantial research is required.

### **Submission**

- 2.16. The student must submit for examination and to Turnitin in accordance with the [standard submission process](#).
- 2.17. The student's submission must consist of the following:
  - 2.17.1. The standard preliminary pages, as set out in the [dissertation content and format section](#).
  - 2.17.2. A signed statement on how far the published work is based on their own independent study. The student must make clear how far each published work was conducted in collaboration or with the assistance of others and the circumstance in which the work was carried out. The student must

describe how they have made a substantial contribution to any co-authored works.

2.17.3. A substantial commentary of up to 10,000 words. The commentary must state the aims and nature of the research, demonstrate the coherence across the published work, and indicate the student's view of their work's significance and original contribution to the field.

2.17.4. A curriculum vitae that focuses on the student's research career and on the circumstances in which the research that led to the published work was carried out.

2.17.5. Copies of the publications. The student can include publications beyond those listed in their application if they are at least in press at the point of submission.

## **Examination**

2.18. A doctoral award by published work must be of an equivalent standard to a doctoral degree by dissertation, as set out in the [award criteria](#).

2.19. An EngD by published work student must also demonstrate an appreciation of the industrial context and significance of the research in their submission and examination.

2.20. An MD by published work student must also demonstrate their contribution to the advancement of medical knowledge in their submission and examination.

2.21. A doctoral degree by published work is examined in the same way as all research degrees with an oral examination. The advisor will undertake the role allocated to the main supervisor in selecting examiners.

2.22. Examiners can recommend any of the [standard outcomes](#) from an examination. For outcomes that require revisions, the examiners can only specify changes to the text in the commentary and not to the publications. Examiners can also require that individual publications are removed as part of the revision process.



### 3. PGR admission, registration, and induction

The regulations in this section cover minimum requirements and decisions for admissions, the rules for registration, and what must be covered in induction.

In this section:

- Admission requirements
- Admission decisions
- Registration
- Induction

#### Admission requirements

- 3.1. For admission to a PGR degree programme, an applicant must as a minimum meet at least one of the following criteria:
  - 3.1.1. Have a first degree, normally an upper second class (2.1) or above honour's degree from a UK university or an overseas equivalent.
  - 3.1.2. Have a relevant master's degree.
  - 3.1.3. Have evidence of prior learning or achievement that demonstrates the individual's potential to succeed in completing the PGR degree programme.
- 3.2. The [postgraduate prospectus](#) sets out programme-specific PGR admission requirements, including English language entry requirements for applicants whose first language is not English.
- 3.3. Doctoral training entities can have additional admission criteria.
- 3.4. Applicants who wish to study by distance learning must follow the admission considerations in the [policy for research degrees by distance learning](#).

#### Admission decisions

- 3.5. Admission decisions for a PGR programme must be made by two or more members of academic staff.
- 3.6. When making admission decisions, selectors must take account of the University's statutory responsibilities for equal opportunities and of any related policies. Admission decisions must be based on fair and justifiable criteria.
- 3.7. Selectors must keep a record of their admission decisions.
- 3.8. Where interviews are used as part of admission decisions, the applicant's expected supervisors (if known) should normally be part of the interview panel. For some applicants, including those linked to a doctoral training entity with a taught component, it will not always be possible to identify expected supervisors at this stage.

- 3.9. Where admission decisions need to accommodate multiple institutions as part of a doctoral training entity, the core principles of the University's admissions policy must be upheld.

### **Registration**

- 3.10. PGR students must register with the University when they begin their studies and at the start of each academic year.
- 3.11. A PGR student registered at the University is subject to all relevant regulations and policies. Unless specified in a partnership agreement, this remains the case when a student spends part of their period of study at another organisation.

### *Partnerships*

- 3.12. A student registered for a PGR degree that is linked to a partnership with another organisation can be subject to specific requirements, which will be set out in the partnership agreement.
- 3.13. A student registered on a collaborative doctoral programme that contains an integrated taught component can be subject to the regulations of the partner organisation for all or part of the taught component, as specified in the partnership agreement.
- 3.14. Doctoral students registered on a joint or dual award can be subject to regulations and policies at both partners as specified in the partnership agreement. This can include a combination of requirements on, for example, examination so that both the University's regulations and the requirements of the partner organisation are met.

### *Concurrent registration*

- 3.15. A PGR student who is registered for a programme of full-time study that leads to an award from the University of Bristol cannot be concurrently registered for full- or part-time study on another programme that leads to an award from the University or from another institution unless there is a permitted exception.
- 3.16. The only exceptions for full-time PGR students to be concurrently registered on another programme are as follows:
- 3.16.1. If this is a requirement of the student's programme. For example, if this is required for a professional programme or for a joint or dual doctoral award.
- 3.16.2. If the student is registered for a taught or research master's degree, they can also be registered for a doctorate at the University of Bristol with the following conditions:
- 3.16.2.1. They have submitted their master's dissertation and the offer of a doctoral place is not conditional on the result.
- 3.16.2.2. If the student is required to correct errors of substance (or similar if at another institution) or to resubmit their master's dissertation,

they must suspend from the doctorate while making the revisions or withdraw from the master's programme.

#### *Transferring between degrees*

- 3.17. A student registered on a research master's programme may have the opportunity to transfer to a doctoral degree if the student is making satisfactory progress and if this is in line with faculty rules. Such a transfer normally happens after one year of full-time study (or part-time equivalent) at research master's level.
- 3.18. A student registered on a doctoral programme may have the opportunity to transfer to a research master's programme or to another doctoral programme if this is in line with faculty rules.

#### *Transferring from another institution*

- 3.19. To be eligible for a doctoral award, a student who transfers from another institution must complete at least one year of full-time doctoral study (or part-time equivalent) at the University before they reach the end of the minimum period of study. A student cannot transfer in just for the final year of study.
- 3.20. A school can accept a doctoral student from another institution who is part way through their studies if the school is satisfied that the student has worked at an equivalent level to a Bristol doctoral student at a comparable stage.

#### **Induction**

- 3.21. There are minimum requirements for the induction of new PGR students. Faculties and school must determine what induction activities and information will be covered at their respective levels.
- 3.22. As part of induction, PGR students must have access to information on what they need to begin their programme of study.
- 3.23. PGR students must have access to information about the environment in which they will be studying. This includes the names and contact details of staff involved in supporting them.
- 3.24. Induction activities must take account of the needs of different groups of PGR students, including part-time, distance learning, and international students.
- 3.25. PGR students must have access to information in the following areas:
  - 3.25.1. On the regulations and policies that apply to them, including in relation to supervision, progress monitoring and examination.
  - 3.25.2. On their specific supervisory arrangements, including on the importance of their relationship with their supervisors.
  - 3.25.3. On how to access the learning infrastructure, including arrangements for remote access, available equipment, library and computing facilities, and study and social spaces.

- 3.25.4. On the University's expectations and the student's responsibilities.
- 3.25.5. On the day-to-day support and communication for students, including on pastoral care and wellbeing.
- 3.25.6. On the opportunities for developing research and other skills.
- 3.25.7. On school and faculty arrangements for evaluating student feedback and for addressing problems raised by students.
- 3.25.8. On provision for meeting students' personal, social, wellbeing and recreational needs, including information on facilities, opportunities, and sources of support within the University.

## 4. PGR period of study

The regulations in this section cover a PGR student's period of study and how this relates to their final submission deadline and to their final completion limit. Suspensions, extensions, and changes in the mode of attendance are also explained.

In this section:

- Definition
- Minimum and maximum periods of study
- Part-time considerations
- Transferring programmes
- Final year of study
- Final completion limit
- Interruptions and changes to study
- Suspensions
- Extensions
- Submitting requests
- Emergency extension requests
- Requests and the final completion limit
- Approving requests
- Changes in the mode of attendance

### Guidance related to these regulations

- [Guidance for PGR students on absences](#)

### Definition

- 4.1. The period of study runs from the start of a PGR student's expected engagement with their degree and ends with the submission of their dissertation for examination.
- 4.2. Each PGR student has a normal minimum and maximum period of study depending on their degree and on their mode of attendance.
- 4.3. A PGR student's period of study starts from when the University expects the student to first engage with their PGR degree programme.
- 4.4. A PGR student must submit their dissertation for examination by the end of their maximum period of study at the latest. This counts as their final submission deadline.
- 4.5. The final submission deadline will change if there are any approved suspensions or extensions.
- 4.6. There are [submission rules](#) on when and how a student can submit.

## Minimum and maximum periods of study

4.7. The normal minimum and maximum periods of study for doctoral degrees are as follows:

- 4.7.1. Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). Full-time minimum of three years and a maximum of four years. Part-time minimum of six years and a maximum of eight years.
- 4.7.2. Engineering Doctorate (EngD). Full-time minimum of three years and a maximum of four years. Part-time minimum of six years and a maximum of eight years.
- 4.7.3. Doctor of Medicine (MD). Full-time minimum of two years and a maximum of five years. Part-time minimum of four years and a maximum of eight years.
- 4.7.4. Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS). Full-time minimum of three years and a maximum of three years. Part-time minimum of six years and a maximum of six years.
- 4.7.5. Doctor of Educational Psychology (DEdPsy). Full-time minimum of three years and a maximum of four years. Part-time minimum of six years and a maximum of eight years.
- 4.7.6. Doctor of Education (EdD). Full-time minimum of three years and a maximum of four years. Part-time minimum of six years and a maximum of eight years.

4.8. A [doctoral degree by published work](#) has a one-year period of study.

4.9. The normal minimum and maximum periods of study for research master's degrees are as follows:

- 4.9.1. Master of Music (MMus). Full-time minimum of two years and a maximum of three years. Part-time minimum of four years and a maximum of six years.
- 4.9.2. Master of Philosophy (MPhil) in the Faculty of Arts. Full-time minimum of one year and a maximum of one year. Part-time minimum of two years and a maximum of two years.
- 4.9.3. Master of Philosophy (MPhil) in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law. Full-time minimum of one year and a maximum of two years. Part-time minimum of two years and a maximum of four years.
- 4.9.4. Master of Science by Research (MScR). Full-time minimum of one year and a maximum of two years. Part-time minimum of two years and a maximum of four years.

- 4.10. The part-time periods of study are based on a student studying at 50% but will be adjusted where study is on a different basis.

#### **Part-time considerations**

- 4.11. The part-time period of study is the pro-rata equivalent of the full-time period of study for the relevant degree, except for the Doctor of Medicine (MD).
- 4.12. Part-time students who registered before 19 September 2022 have a shorter maximum period of study, which was set when they first registered unless they requested to change to the longer maximum period of study by 31 July 2023.
- 4.13. A part-time student who registered before 19 September 2023, but who was unable to request the longer period of study by 31 July 2023 because they were on suspension, can make such a request within two months of their return from suspension.
- 4.14. The Doctor of Dental Surgery (DSS) in Health Sciences and the Master of Philosophy (MPhil) in Arts did not modify their maximum periods of study on 19 September 2022 and so part-time students on these degrees do not have an option of changing their period of study.

#### **Transferring programmes**

- 4.15. If a student transfers between PGR programmes, the Faculty PGR Director must set an appropriate remaining period of study to allow the student sufficient time to prepare and submit their dissertation for examination.
- 4.16. If a student initially registers on a research master's programme and later transfers to a doctoral programme, the time spent on the master's programme counts as part of their doctoral period of study.
- 4.17. If a student transfers from a doctoral to a research master's programme, the Faculty PGR Director can set an overall maximum period of study that exceeds the research master's normal limit so that the student has sufficient time to prepare and submit their dissertation.

#### **Final year of study**

- 4.18. For full-time students, the final year of study is the last year of the relevant maximum period of study.
- 4.19. For part-time students studying on a 50% basis, the final year of study is the last two years of the relevant maximum period of study. If the student is studying on a different basis, the final year will be the appropriate pro-rata equivalent.

#### **Final completion limit**

- 4.20. The Research Degrees Examination Board must award a PGR student their degree by the end of the student's final completion limit. This is the total time permitted for the student to complete all aspects of their degree and to receive their award.

- 4.21. The final completion limit for all PGR degrees is the relevant maximum period of study plus five years. A student who does not receive their award within this timescale will be deemed to have withdrawn.
- 4.22. The final completion limit runs from the student's start date and is not changed by any approved suspensions or extensions.
- 4.23. A PGR student who has changed their mode of attendance or who has transferred programme will have their final completion limit adjusted proportionately to reflect the different maximum periods of study in force before and after the change.

#### **Interruptions and changes to study**

- 4.24. The University expects PGR students to submit within their normal maximum period of study but there are circumstances where a suspension, an extension, or a change in the mode of attendance might be necessary.
- 4.25. PGR students who are studying with a student visa must seek advice on interruptions and changes to study from [Student Visas](#).
- 4.26. A funded PGR student must ensure that they do not contravene their funder's terms and conditions. A funded PGR student must obtain any required agreement from their funder as part of a request for a suspension, extension or change in the mode of attendance.

#### **Suspensions**

- 4.27. A PGR student can request a suspension at any stage of their period of study. A suspension normally relates to a reason external a student's research and results in the following:
  - 4.27.1. It pauses the student's period of study and so does not increase the overall amount of time for study.
  - 4.27.2. It changes the final submission deadline.
  - 4.27.3. It does not change the final completion limit.
- 4.28. A suspension can, for example, cover the following situations:
  - 4.28.1. Significant illness. If a student suspends on health reasons, the student might need to provide a letter from a medical practitioner at the end of the suspension to confirm that they are fit to return.
  - 4.28.2. Significant family or financial problems.
  - 4.28.3. Taking advantage of a career opportunity.
  - 4.28.4. Some [placements](#) might require a suspension.
  - 4.28.5. Jury service. If the initial period of jury service is extended, the student can request a further suspension in parallel to the jury service continuing.



- 4.28.6. [Maternity, adoption, and partner/other parent leave](#). The request must include appropriate evidence, such as a maternity certificate (MAT B1) or evidence of the placement of a child for adoption.
- 4.28.7. Where [short-term exceptional leave](#) on emergency or compassionate grounds has not fully met the student's needs, or where the student has sought short-term leave on multiple occasions within an academic year.
- 4.28.8. The [support to study policy](#) might be applicable for some suspensions.
- 4.29. A suspension must be for the shortest period necessary based on the individual circumstances.
- 4.30. A PGR student who is unable to return to study after a period of suspension must apply for a further suspension before the first period ends.
- 4.31. The University cannot backdate suspensions for more than one month unless there is an exceptional reason for the delay in the request. The Faculty PGR Director must consider any exceptional reasons when assessing a late suspension.
- 4.32. A funded PGR student must refer to the [policy on absence payments for PGR students](#) for the rules on suspensions and funding.
- 4.33. Funded PGR students must seek any required approval from their funder when requesting a suspension.

### **Extensions**

- 4.34. A PGR student can only request an extension in their final year of study (pro-rata equivalent for part-time students) unless there are any funder or partnership rules that permit an earlier request. An extension results in the following:
- 4.34.1. It lengthens the student's period of study and so increases the overall amount of time for study.
- 4.34.2. It changes the final submission deadline.
- 4.34.3. It does not change the final completion limit.
- 4.35. A PGR student must provide a compelling reason for an extension and normally with the support of the main supervisor and school. A request can result from the supervisor's review of the student's progress four months before the intended submission date or for another reason.
- 4.36. An extension must be for the shortest period necessary based on the individual circumstances.
- 4.37. The PGR student might have to pay an additional fee for an extension.

- 4.38. Funded PGR students must seek any required approval from their funder when requesting an extension.

### **Submitting requests**

- 4.39. PGR students must submit suspension and extension requests on the appropriate form.
- 4.40. As part of their request, a PGR student must include any relevant supporting evidence, such as any medical reports (in confidence), copies of relevant correspondence, and a work plan that shows how they will complete their research by the new proposed deadline.

### **Emergency extension requests**

- 4.41. A PGR student can request an emergency extension if there are unforeseen circumstances near their final submission deadline that stop them submitting by their deadline.
- 4.42. Funded PGR students must seek any required approval from their funder when requesting an emergency extension. If the request is close to the student's final submission deadline and prior approval from the funder is not possible, the student makes the request at their own risk.
- 4.43. The Faculty PGR Director can approve an emergency extension if the student has experienced unforeseen circumstances that stop them submitting by their deadline.
- 4.44. Emergency extensions must not usually exceed ten working days (which do not include University closure days) but can be for longer if there are exceptional circumstances that warrant a longer period. Retrospective emergency extensions are permissible.

### **Requests and the final completion limit**

- 4.45. Suspensions and extensions do not change the PGR student's final completion limit, which is the last date that the Research Degrees Examination Board can award the student their degree.
- 4.46. The Faculty PGR Director must consider whether a request will take a student's total period of suspensions and extensions in to the last two years of the student's final completion limit. Any encroachment in to those last two years risks leaving insufficient time for the completion of the examination process (including any required corrections).
- 4.47. The Faculty PGR Director can decline a request or adjust the requested period if a suspension or extension will take the student's total period of suspensions and extensions in to the last two years of their final completion limit.

### **Approving requests**

- 4.48. The Faculty PGR Director can make any of the following decisions on suspension and extension requests:

- 4.48.1. Approve.
  - 4.48.2. Approve with an adjusted period.
  - 4.48.3. Decline.
  - 4.48.4. For complex cases, escalate to the Associate Pro-Vice Chancellor (PGR). Complex cases can, for example, include suspensions related to [support to study policy](#) and where a request will encroach significantly in to the last two years of the final completion limit.
- 4.49. The Associate Pro-Vice Chancellor (PGR) makes the decision on escalated complex cases and has oversight of any suspensions or extensions that exceed one year in total.

### **Changes in the mode of attendance**

- 4.50. A PGR student can request to change their mode of attendance from full-time to part-time, or vice versa. A change in the mode of attendance will result in the following:
- 4.50.1. It changes the student's period of study to reflect the new mode of attendance.
  - 4.50.2. It changes the final submission deadline.
  - 4.50.3. It adjusts the final completion limit.
- 4.51. A request to change the mode of attendance can, for example, result from a PGR student's personal or employment circumstances.
- 4.52. A change in the mode of attendance can be used on health grounds if the change would help the student's medical condition. A suspension might however be more appropriate depending on the circumstances.
- 4.53. The Faculty PGR Director can approve a request to change a PGR student's mode of attendance with the following conditions:
- 4.53.1. A PGR student can normally only change their mode of attendance a maximum of twice during their period of study. In exceptional circumstances, the Faculty PGR Director can approve a further change if it will help address those exceptional circumstances.
  - 4.53.2. A PGR student who is in their final year of study (pro-rata equivalent for part-time students) can only change their mode of attendance if there are exceptional circumstances and where a suspension or extension is not a more appropriate solution.
- 4.54. Funded PGR students must seek any required approval from their funder when requesting a change in their mode of attendance.

## Policy for research degrees by distance learning

This policy defines the requirements for research degrees that are conducted through distance learning. It should be read in conjunction with the regulations and code of practice for research degree programmes, which sets out the University's requirements in relation to all research students.

The policy covers:

- Definition
- Distance learning and partnership agreements
- Principles
- International students
- Admissions and additional considerations
- Changes in location of study
- Student fees and costs
- Supervision
- Student support
- Student representation
- Attendance at the University
- Training and resources
- Research community
- Provision of information
- Progress and review arrangements
- Assessment
- Reviewing provision

1. A student studying by distance learning will mostly be away from the University, but they will also benefit from visits to the campus. These compulsory visits will allow face-to-face interactions with supervisors, as well as engagement with on-campus development opportunities and with wider research activities. The student is responsible for the costs related to compulsory visits including for travel, accommodation, and any visa requirements.
2. Some responsibilities set out in this policy can be allocated to either the school or the faculty, depending on how each faculty is organised. Each faculty and school must be aware of where the responsibility lies for them.

### Definition

3. Students studying for research degrees by distance learning undertake most of their research away from the University either in the UK or overseas. This is combined with compulsory visits to the University and appropriate remote support.
4. Research degrees by distance learning will be appropriate for students where relevant resources are largely available locally or online.
5. The significant factors in determining whether a research degree by distance learning is appropriate are a) where the primary means of supervision is remote and b) where the student's research project is not dependent on the University's on-site facilities.

6. Research students who are away from the University to undertake fieldwork, etc. are not classified as studying for a research degree by distance learning. There are however elements of this policy that may act as good practice for those students, such as how to engage with the University when not on campus.
7. A research degree by distance learning is not a split-site PhD, where the student spends time at both the University and another institution within a fully collaborative structure. For split-site PhDs a written agreement is always required with the other organisation, while for distance learning the primary relationship is normally with the research student.
8. If however a student who wishes to study by distance learning has a research project that is dependent on an employer or another organisation (for example, a dependency on facilities or data), a written agreement must be put in place.
9. The expectations set out in this policy may also be relevant to educational partnerships developed through other routes, where the location of study is deemed to be distance learning.

### **Distance learning and partnership agreements**

10. A partnership agreement is required for a research degree by distance learning if the student's project is **dependent** on an employer or another organisation (see the [regulations and code of practice for educational collaborative arrangements](#)). The agreement may, for example, be limited to covering the dependent use of facilities or data and to any intellectual property issues, depending on the nature of the project and on the University's relationship with the other organisation.
11. The approval process, which includes a due diligence consideration and an enhanced approval route where a partnership is required, will be completed before any written agreement is set up.
12. If the student is based in, or has access to, an environment that is conducive to research (such as through a research or educational organisation) but is not dependent on it, a letter must be obtained from the organisation to confirm its general support. A partnership agreement is not required in these cases.

### **Principles**

13. A research degree by distance learning offers a high level of flexibility for the student, but it requires the same commitment for serious study as for any research degree. It is therefore vital that the student can make the commitment and that the University is in position to offer the necessary support.
14. The school or faculty must provide clear and realistic advice to the prospective student on expectations in relation to distance learning, including on the level of

autonomy placed upon them, on the requirement to attend the University at certain times, and on the extent of support that will be available to them.

15. Students studying through distance learning are required to ensure that they have access to an appropriate local research environment so that they can complete their research project. There must also be access to the relevant research environment at the University through a combination of remote links and scheduled visits.
16. Schools must decide whether they wish to offer research degrees by distance learning as an option for their research degree programmes. There may however be cases where it will not be feasible, particularly in lab-based disciplines where appropriate local provision is not available or where regular access to University on-site facilities is required. The approval and admissions process requires a consideration of whether appropriate access to resources and support is in place.
17. Research degrees by distance learning may be undertaken on either a full-time or part-time basis and are subject to the normal minimum and maximum periods of study set out in the regulations and code of practice for research degree programmes.
18. Studying for a research degree by distance learning is not permissible if it contravenes the regulations of any funders.
19. Successful students will receive an award from the University of Bristol. The degree certificate for research degrees by distance learning is the same as for any other location of study as the criteria for the award are identical.

### **International students**

20. Research degrees by distance learning are open to international students, and their visits to the University must comply with the requirements of the UK Government at the time of travel. These requirements may change over the course of the programme.
21. International students studying for research degrees by distance learning must follow the current requirements to secure standard visitor visas for visits to the University. More information is available on the [Student Visas webpages](#). It might also be necessary for the student to obtain an Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) certificate, depending on their nationality and on the subject before they can study in the UK.
22. The University cannot guarantee that an international student studying for a research degree by distance learning will be able to secure a standard visitor visa for each visit. International students will be provided with appropriate documentation from the University to support applications for standard visitor visas, but the responsibility to meet visa requirements remains with the student.

## Admissions and additional considerations

23. Schools must decide whether they wish to include a distance learning option for their research degrees in the prospectus and in any promotional materials. A specific distance learning route code must be set up to register distance learning students in the student record. Where distance learning is included, an acknowledgement of the requirement for standard visitor visas for international students and a link to [Student Visas webpages](#) must be included.
24. Where research degrees by distance learning are permitted, the school or faculty – including the potential supervisors – must make additional considerations, alongside the general admission requirements, to determine that the prospective student is able to pursue their study through distance learning and that the school is able to support them appropriately.
25. The school or faculty must confirm that the following considerations have been addressed for a prospective student for a distance learning arrangement:
  - a. Confidence that the school can provide adequate support for the prospective students, mainly through supervision, links to the relevant research environment, suitable technology for remote contact, and access to relevant University systems.
    - i. Where the prospective student is based overseas, the school or faculty must seek advice from IT Services on any cybersecurity implications for overseas access to University IT systems.
  - b. Confidence that the school can accommodate compulsory visits.
    - i. Where the prospective student is based overseas, the school or faculty must be aware of the visa requirements for visits on the [Student Visas webpages](#) and seek guidance from Student Visas if questions remain.
  - c. Confidence that the prospective student can undertake research remotely, that the student's location is suitable for research, and that there is appropriate equipment in place to allow remote contact.
  - d. Confirmation from the prospective student that they understand the obligations placed on them – including for compulsory visits and related visa requirements – and that they can meet the financial demands of studying by distance learning covering tuition fees and other costs, such as the costs related to compulsory visits.
    - i. Where the prospective student is based overseas, they should ensure that they are aware of any implications for tax liability from undertaking a research degree by distance learning.
  - e. Where the research will be dependent on an employer or another organisation, confirmation from the employer/organisation of its support and its acknowledgement that a written agreement will be required.

- f. Where the prospective student is employed by, or has a relationship with, an organisation and will benefit from its research environment but where the research is not dependent on the relationship, confirmation from the organisation of its general support for the student.
26. Where a partnership agreement is required, the school or faculty should make early contact with the educational partnerships team within Academic Quality and Policy Office to obtain advice and to allow sufficient time for the development and approval of the partnership.
27. As part of the admissions process, the Faculty PGR Director must approve the distance learning arrangements, which will include the school or faculty confirmation that the additional considerations set out above have been addressed. An offer of a place must not be made until the Faculty PGR Director has given approval for the arrangement.

### **Changes in location of study**

28. An application to study a research degree by distance learning is normally only made during the admissions process. In exceptional circumstances, current campus-based research students may be allowed to transfer their location of study to distance learning. In those cases, the additional considerations required as part of the application process must still be completed and approved before the transfer will be allowed.
29. For international students who in exceptional circumstances wish to change from studying at the University with a student visa to studying by distance learning, advice must be sought from Student Visas. A move to distance learning will require the withdrawal of the University's sponsorship of the student's visa, with the student relying on securing standard visitor visas for all further visits to the University.
30. Students studying for a research degree by distance learning may make a request to change to campus-based study. Possible reasons for such a request may include changes to the student's personal or employment circumstances. Approval for a change in the location of study must be sought from the Faculty PGR Director, who will make a decision based on the feasibility of the request for both the student (in terms of practical arrangements and any visa requirements) and for the school (in terms of available resources). There is no automatic right to change from distance learning to campus-based study.
31. For international students studying for a research degree by distance learning who wish to change to another location of study, advice must be sought from the Student Visas. A move to study at the University requires a student visa, which is sponsored by the University and is secured in the student's country of residence.



## **Student fees and costs**

32. The tuition fees for students studying for a research degree by distance learning are the same as for campus-based study. Students must also arrange and cover the costs for their visits to the University, including for travel, accommodation, and any visa requirements. These additional costs do not form part of the tuition fees, and this must be made clear in public information and in communications with prospective students.

## **Supervision**

33. In all cases, the supervisory requirements set out in the regulations and code of practice for research degree programmes must be met.
34. The significant supervisory characteristic for students studying by distance learning will be that they engage with their supervisors mostly through electronic means. There should also be a clear understanding between the student and the supervisors on what constitutes reasonable access if advice is required outside of pre-arranged supervisory meetings.
35. The visits to the University provide opportunities for face-to-face supervision.
36. Supervisors must be aware of their responsibilities in relation to students studying by distance learning. The time and commitment required for distance learning supervision will be no less, and may be more, than for supervision of students based at the University.
37. Where a written agreement is in place, a formal local contact or co-supervisor may be identified to assist in supporting the student. For local co-supervisors, this may be as an honorary member of staff.
38. Where the student is based in an organisation that supports an environment that is conducive to research, an informal local support contact may be available to the student. In these cases, arrangements should be made between the supervisors and the local support contact. It must be made clear that any arrangements are of an informal nature and the local contact is not a member of the supervisory team.

## **Student support**

39. The school or faculty and the main supervisor must ensure that pastoral considerations are included as part of the supervisory process. It is acknowledged that access to the University's on-site Student Services may be limited for students not based on campus.

## **Student representation**

40. Students studying for research degrees by distance learning are included in the University student representation system for research students.

41. The school or faculty must ensure that students studying for research degrees by distance learning have opportunities to engage with student-staff liaison committees (SSLCs). It may not be possible for distance learning research students to attend SSLCs in person.

### **Attendance at the University**

42. Students studying for a research degree by distance learning are required to visit the University during their period of study. These visits allow face-to-face interactions with supervisors, as well as engagement with on-campus development opportunities and with wider research activities.
43. The minimum requirement is for a two-week within the first year of study, plus a further visit in a later year of study of at least one week to coincide with any on-campus training needs and/or for an annual progress review. The requirement is the same for both full-time and part-time students.
44. The school or faculty can set further attendance requirements if this is deemed necessary. In some cases, it may be appropriate for the student to attend the University for further visits and/or for longer periods. Visits must however remain within a distance learning structure and must not impact negatively on any visa requirements. For international students, advice must be sought from Student Visas in these cases.
45. For international students, the faculty or school must:
  - a. Ensure there is a process in place to ensure that international students present their standard visitor visas for scanning to Student Visas upon arrival for each visit to the UK, prior to any engagement with their studies.
  - b. Ensure that students relying on standard visitor visas are referred to the [Student Visas webpages](#) prior to each visit to the University so that they are aware of current visa rules. Visa applications must be made in good time.
  - c. The faculty (or school in some cases) can provide a Standard Visitor support letter where this is required.
46. The first visit to the University allows for an induction and individually tailored project development with the supervisory team. Opportunities for training and engaging in research community activities be considered during the visit. The second visit should continue to address the developmental and engagement needs of the student.
47. The school is responsible for ensuring that students studying for a research degree by distance learning have access to an appropriate place to work and suitable equipment during visits.
48. Any variation from the visit schedule must be agreed by the main supervisor and the School PGR Director. For international students, advice must be sought from Student Visas on whether there are any implications related to visa requirements.

49. An exemption for non-attendance for a compulsory visit, where it has not been possible to rearrange the visit, will only be granted in exceptional circumstances with the agreement of the Faculty PGR Director. Where the student does not attend a compulsory visit, and where the Faculty PGR Director has not agreed the non-attendance, the student may be deemed to have withdrawn because they will not have met the requirements of their registration.
50. The University cannot guarantee that international students will be able to secure a visa for each visit or, if necessary, an Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) certificate. If students are unable to secure a visa or, where necessary a certificate, they may have to apply for suspensions of study until their situation is resolved.

### **Training and resources**

51. A student studying for a research degree by distance learning must have access to appropriate research skills training, which is normally provided by schools and faculties, and to the University's personal and professional development programme. The training may be provided as part of student's visits to the University and online resources may be available in some areas. Some University-based training may only be available at certain times of the year, which may require a student's visit to be arranged accordingly.
52. As for all research degrees, supervisors and students must regularly review training needs. For distance learning research students, an initial consideration of training needs must take place before the first visit. As there are only limited online resources, particular consideration must be given to training opportunities during student visits.

### **Research community**

53. Participating in the research community, including through opportunities to network with their peers, is an important aspect of study for all research students. For PGR students studying by distance learning, engaging with the research community should form part of their visits to the University, together with online provision and connections to the school's research community.

### **Provision of information**

54. Public information and communications to prospective students must provide clear and realistic guidance on the expectations for distance learning, including on how the student will engage with the University and details on tuition fees and additional costs.
55. Students studying for a research degree by distance learning will have access to online information, access to e-library resources and links to training opportunities.

## **Progress and review arrangements**

56. Annual progress monitoring must be the same as the process followed by PGR students based at the University. Students studying for a research degree by distance learning may be required to be in attendance at the University for a progress review (as part of a visit), or the process may be conducted online.

## **Assessment**

57. The assessment process, including the submission of the dissertation and the subsequent oral examination, is set out in the regulations and code of practice for research degree programmes.
58. The oral examination can be held in person, partly online or fully online with the agreement of the examiners and the PGR student.
59. Where an in-person oral examination will be held, students studying for a research degree by distance learning must be informed of the date of the oral examination in good time so that they are able to make appropriate travel, accommodation, and any visa arrangements. For international students, this should normally be 12 – 16 weeks in advance.

## **Reviewing provision**

60. Schools must monitor the progress and outcomes for students studying for research degrees by distance learning.

## Policy on PGR placements

This policy defines the University requirements for placements for PGR students. It sets the standards and framework for the development and management of those arrangements. All University of Bristol PGR students who undertake placements are covered by this policy.

The policy covers:

- Definition
- Principles
- Developing placements
- Annual review process
- Examples of where a placement agreement is or is not required

### Definition

1. Placements (which are sometimes referred to as internships) involve PGR students spending a defined period of time at another organisation to gain work-based practical experience or to undertake activities or research that contributes directly to their training. The host organisation will normally expect that the PGR student engages with the organisation's objectives during the placement, with a work plan agreed before the placement starts.
2. The policy applies to the following:
  - a. Where a PGR student remains subject to the University's regulations but where there is a transfer of direct day-to-day supervision/management to the host organisation; and
  - b. Where the duration is for two weeks or more.
3. PGR students who are sponsored by an external funder (including those funded by UK Research Councils) are covered by this policy and may also be subject to specific terms and conditions from their funder in relation to placements. In cases where PGR students are based at the premises of their external funder for a period of time (for example where the funder is a professional or industrial organisation), a separate placement agreement is not required if this has been covered in the overall student agreement.
4. Illustrative examples of what types of activity require or do not require placement agreements are included at the end of the policy.
5. PGR students who are registered at other institutions and who undertake a placement at the University are **not** covered by this policy.
6. Placements will vary depending on PGR student and supervisor choices, on the funder and on the circumstances. Placements may be an optional opportunity for PGR students, or a requirement of their programme of study, funded by an external funder. A suspension of study may be required, or a placement may be integral to the programme of study. Placements may be connected to students' research projects, or they may provide opportunities to gain new skills and experience away from the

research. This policy sets out the general principles that relate to all types of placements for PGR students.

## **Principles**

7. The University recognises the value of placements in the professional development and in expanding career options for PGR students. Potential benefits include opportunities to learn new skills, to enhance employability prospects, to experience other workplaces, and to gain new insights for research projects. PGR students are therefore encouraged to take up opportunities offered to them.
8. The University values the opportunities provided by a wide range of organisations that host its PGR students for placements and aims to have constructive relationships with them.
9. The University has a duty of care for its students, and a member of University staff must be assigned as a point of contact for PGR students when they are on placements. This would normally be the main supervisor or a nominee. The University-assigned contact has a responsibility to maintain contact with the PGR student and with the hosting organisation.
10. Organisations that host placements have a responsibility to ensure that PGR students receive appropriate support and have access to facilities and resources, and that there is a named local supervisor/manager to provide direct guidance for the PGR student.
11. PGR students undertaking placements should be diligent and professional and remain subject to the University's regulations. They should keep their University-assigned contact informed of their progress and of any problems that occur.
12. The decision on whether the PGR student needs to suspend may be determined by a range of factors, such as requirements of the funding body and the duration of the placement.

## **Developing placements**

13. There is a University process, based on the principles set out in this policy, to assist faculties and schools in developing and approving placements for PGR students.
14. Placement opportunities will originate from multiple sources. For example, there may be existing links between the University and potential hosting organisations, or PGR students and their supervisors may locate opportunities themselves.
15. All placements must have a written, legally binding, agreement in place prior to their start. The process to develop a placement agreement will cover a due diligence check on the proposed hosting organisation, a consideration of the support that will be available to the student during the placement, and any necessary visa requirements. The supervisor or nominee must notify the School PGR Director and,

with guidance from the Secretary's Office, will work with the proposed hosting organisation to develop the basis for the agreement, which will normally include establishing a work plan for the PGR student during the placement.

16. The placement agreement will include:
  - a) The responsibilities of all relevant parties, including reference to any agreed work plans;
  - b) Confirmation that suitable insurance is in place, such as employers' liability cover;
  - c) Confirmation that health, safety and welfare requirements are covered;
  - d) A consideration of confidentiality and Intellectual Property; and
  - e) Provisions for the withdrawal or termination of the agreement if a student's wellbeing is compromised, if there are instances of serious misconduct, or for other reasons.
17. The placement agreement will be signed by the PGR student, by a representative of the hosting organisation and by the Faculty PGR Director for the relevant faculty.

### **Annual progress monitoring process**

18. A PGR student's placement should be considered in the annual progress monitoring process as part of their reflections on, and plans for, their personal and professional development.

### **Examples of where a placement agreement is or is not required**

- **Example A: Student goes to a third party to conduct work for their PhD and a placement agreement is required**

Student A is undertaking a PhD on the impact of hypertension drugs on patients with Alzheimer's. The student will be based at a private laboratory for three months testing patient samples to gain expertise in testing techniques and to gather data. During their time at the laboratory, the student will engage with its work and will be managed by a member of its staff. The results of the testing will form part of the student's PhD project. A placement agreement will be required, which will include Intellectual Property considerations.
- **Example B: Student goes to a third party for work-based experience and a placement agreement is required**

Student B's PhD relates to carbon dating techniques and the student wishes to gain a wider knowledge of relevant sectors to enhance their career options. The student will spend one month at the Plant Museum to work on applications of carbon dating for cataloguing plant specimens. The work will not contribute to Student B's PhD project, but it will provide work-based practical experience. The student will engage fully with the objectives of, and will be managed by, the Plant Museum. There is no existing Student Agreement in place as the Plant Museum is not involved in the funding of the student's PhD, and a placement agreement must therefore be put in place. As the data or information arising from the placement will not relate to the student's PhD, this does not have to be owned by the student or the University.

- **Example C: Student goes to a facility of a funder/project sponsor and a placement agreement is not required**

Student C is undertaking a PhD in aeronautical engineering funded by Aerospace plc. As part of their studies, the student will be based at Aerospace plc's research establishment for six months to carry out work that will contribute to their PhD project. Day-to-day management of the student will be undertaken by a member of staff from Aerospace plc. A placement agreement is not required as the arrangements for Student C's placement will be addressed in the overall Studentship Agreement with Aerospace plc.

- **Example D: Student goes to another organisation to learn a new technique and a placement agreement is required**

Student D's supervisor recommends that the student spends a month as part of their PhD training at a research group in another university to learn a new experimental technique. There is no partnership in place and day-to-day supervision of the student transfers to the other university for the duration. A placement agreement will be required. As the focus of the placement is on learning a new technique rather than in producing results, a provision for the student/University to own the data is not required.

- **Example E: Student goes to another organisation to learn a new technique and a placement agreement is not required**

Student E wishes to learn how to use a particular technique as part of their PhD project. A research establishment is willing to host the student for a few days to demonstrate how the technique is used. The supervisory team at the University remains responsible for the student and a placement agreement is not required in this case.



## Policy on PGR students who teach

This policy defines the University requirements for PGR students who teach.

The policy covers:

- Definition
- Opportunities to teach
- Activities and responsibilities
- Pastoral care and student wellbeing
- Training and support
- Quality assurance
- Good practice guidance for PGR students who teach

### Definition

1. The University of Bristol recognises the importance and values the contribution of Postgraduate Research (PGR) students in the teaching and assessment of students. Teaching also provides valuable experience for PGR students in many career pathways. The University encourages its PGR students to apply for suitable teaching activities at appropriate points during their period of study where this does not impede the successful completion of their research degree. There is a central application process for teaching opportunities.
2. This policy covers PGR students who are primarily a member of the University as a student. It does not apply to academic staff who are additionally studying for a research degree. The principles of this policy apply as good practice to PGR students who are registered elsewhere and who teach at the University.
3. The Head of School is responsible for PGR students who teach within a school and for the operation of this policy. The Head of School will normally delegate line-management of PGR students who teach to a relevant academic in the school, such as the School Education Director, a Programme Director, or a Unit Director. Other arrangements, such as contractual and administrative matters for PGR students who teach, will normally be delegated to the School Manager or a delegate.
4. The Head of School (or delegate) is responsible for (a) ensuring that there is support and an appropriate teaching load for a PGR student who teaches and (b) ensuring that students being taught by a PGR student have a good-quality experience. The teaching load should be consistent with the school workload allocation model. Where a PGR student teaches away from their home school, the Head of School (or delegate) of their home school retains a responsibility for ensuring that the PGR student's teaching load does not impact negatively on wellbeing or on research progress.
5. PGR students must be contracted for teaching duties and paid the rate agreed within that contract in line with the University's employment policies. The contract must specify the rate of pay, number of contact hours, preparation time, assessment time,

and other related duties. The contract must be agreed with the School Manager or delegate before the PGR student takes up their teaching duties.

6. PGR students who teach will normally only be involved in the teaching and assessment of undergraduate students (exceptions are covered in paragraph 19).

### **Opportunities to teach**

7. All PGR students should be made aware of all teaching opportunities available to them and the central process for application, recognising that such opportunities to teach will vary across schools, and will depend on the subject area, the school's preferred models of delivery, and on student recruitment.
8. The process and arrangements for selecting PGR students to be involved in the teaching process should be fair and transparent and are normally the responsibility of the School Manager or Student Administration Manager. Selection will be undertaken by the relevant Programme Director and based on teaching requirements, the PGR student's communication skills and knowledge of the subject, and any other relevant experience.
9. Unless there is a contractual agreement, such as a Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) scholarship, PGR students cannot be compelled and should not be pressured to take on teaching duties. However, the University strongly encourages PGR students to teach where appropriate for their personal and professional development.
10. Every PGR student who teaches must have a teaching mentor.
11. Teaching must not impede the successful completion of the PGR student's own research degree and must not contravene any relevant funding conditions or UK immigration conditions where applicable. For PGR students studying on a student visa, the number of [working hours permitted per week](#) must be taken into account.
12. PGR students should discuss their planned or agreed teaching activities with their research supervisor/s. The School Manager or another relevant colleague should arrange for the supervisor/s to be notified of contracted teaching and assigned teaching mentors.
13. Where a PGR student requires enhanced academic support, or is subject to the continued concern stage of the unsatisfactory academic progress procedure or to the support to study process, the student's teaching load must be reviewed in a meeting including the Head of School (or delegate), the School PGR Director (and, if relevant, the appropriate Doctoral Training Entity Director), the teaching mentor and the research supervisor/s.
14. Any contract or offer of teaching will be subject to the PGR student satisfying the requirements of a Right to Work check (performed by HR) and any additional UK immigration conditions relating to the work.

## Activities and responsibilities

15. A PGR student can, as appropriate, be employed to deliver or contribute to the following teaching activities:
  - a. Seminars, tutorials, and workshops;
  - b. Laboratory and other practical classes, including demonstrations and projects;
  - c. Field trips;
  - d. Occasional lecturing (see paragraph 18); and
  - e. Assessment and marking.
16. The [teaching support role descriptors](#) provide more information.
17. In line with the recommendation from UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), unless the PGR student holds a Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) post, their teaching activities should not normally exceed six hours in any week (including all preparation, assessment, marking and office hours), taking into account local circumstances (unit structure, intensive teaching, etc.), visa requirements and any particular funder guidance.
18. PGR students should not normally deliver lectures unless they are invited to provide a (paid) lecture within their research specialism.
19. A PGR student should not normally be involved in teaching on Masters-level units, unless they have relevant specialist knowledge and relevant experience, and the Head of School (or delegate) has approved their involvement.
20. It is the individual responsibility of PGR students to ensure they are aware of, and comply with, any working conditions of their UK immigration permission.

## Pastoral care and student wellbeing

21. PGR students who teach might find themselves to be a first point of call for students who are experiencing personal, wellbeing or academic difficulties. PGR students who teach are not expected to provide pastoral care for their students and should not be appointed as a Personal Tutor. However, they need to be aware of the University's system of pastoral care provision and need to know how to direct students to appropriate members of staff if the need arises.
22. Consequently, PGR students who teach must be trained accordingly. They must be paid to undertake the mandatory pastoral care training given to permanent members of staff. PGR students who teach must also be made aware of the support provided by the University for students and be included in relevant School and Department processes as appropriate. Schools must provide guidance on how to respond to situations and on the appropriate local administrative processes.
23. Schools should also provide local inductions for handling personal information, which is subject to the Data Protection Act and should be treated as confidential.

24. The University recognises teaching and its related duties can be both demanding and rewarding. PGR students who teach should be made aware by the school that they have access to University support resources available to permanent staff. Apart from these services, PGR students who teach who experience problems are encouraged to talk to their unit director, line managers or supervisors as a first step. Regular meetings with the unit director should also be used to address problems early on.

### **Training and support**

25. All PGR students who teach must receive appropriate training. This must include:

- a. An initial discipline-specific induction, which must be provided by the school before the PGR students undertakes any teaching activity, including, where relevant and applicable, more detailed guidance on subjects such as marking, teaching preparation and expectations, practicalities around office hours and student contact, etc.;
- b. The introductory teaching course for those new to teaching at Bristol provided by the [Bristol Institute for Learning and Teaching](#). Other optional further teaching development is also available to PGR students.
- c. Mandatory pastoral care training.

26. PGR students who teach must be paid for the mandatory training they undertake.

27. Each PGR student's teaching (including any assessment) must be mentored and monitored by a named member of academic staff (typically the programme or unit director, or the co-teacher on the unit, depending upon local circumstances, or, where appropriate, the supervisor). The mentor is responsible for providing the PGR student with feedback on their teaching through regular monitoring/observation and providing guidance on assessment. The mentor (or a nominee) must conduct scheduled teaching observations at least once a teaching block and decide whether the PGR student needs any additional training or support. They should meet the PGR student regularly and at least once a teaching block. The Bristol Institute for Learning and Teaching (BILT) provides a common [teaching observation form and guidance](#).

28. A PGR student's experience of teaching, and any related skills development, must also be discussed with their supervisor/s as part of the formal review of their development and progress, in line with the requirements for annual progress monitoring set out in the regulations and code of practice for research degree programmes.

29. Wherever appropriate, topics related to PGR students who teach should be fed into or otherwise represented at all levels of the PGR student representation structure.

30. Further information and support for PGR students who teach as Graduate Teachers and demonstrators is available on the [HR webpages](#).

### **Quality Assurance**

31. A PGR student must not be named as Unit Director when contributing to a unit, nor can they be a member of the Board of Examiners or be given any responsibility for the management of programmes, unless special dispensation is provided by the Faculty Education Director.
32. Schools must ensure that the extent of the involvement of PGR students in the delivery of a taught programme is managed and reviewed with the overall learning experience of students in mind. The quality of this experience will be central to decision making about the type, content and amount of teaching undertaken by PGR students. The Head of School (or delegate) is responsible for this process.
33. As part of standard University quality assurance processes, the school (through the Programme or Unit Directors and in collaboration with the respective teaching mentors) must evaluate the performance of PGR students who teach (during and at the end of the teaching activity and including any assessment) in order to ensure that students receive teaching of the appropriate quality. Such evaluations must take account of the taught students' feedback recorded in BLUE as well as any reports resulting from staff observation of the teaching.
34. The official grievance procedure for PGR students who teach is the same as for other staff. However, in the first instance issues regarding teaching should be discussed with the teaching mentor or escalated to the Head of School (or delegate). Issues impacting on the PGR student's research should be discussed with their supervisor/s or escalated to the School PGR Director and, if relevant, the appropriate Doctoral Training Entity Director.

### **Good practice guidance for PGR students who teach**

The involvement of PGR students in the teaching process has mutual benefits for students and staff:

- Undergraduates and other taught students benefit from interacting with individuals who are often closer to their experience of being a student than academic staff;
- the PGR student gains valuable transferable skills to benefit their career development by participating in teaching and the wider activities of their School;
- staff are supported in providing research-rich teaching.

The following suggestions and notes aim to maximise these benefits.

- It is deemed good practice for PGR students to begin their teaching experience by taking part in a co-taught or team-taught unit.

- If possible, experienced PGR students who teach should be offered progressive levels of teaching and be paid at the level appropriate for the relevant role descriptor.
- Where possible, the University should provide space and IT equipment to ensure confidentiality of student work.
- As standard, the school should draw attention to the Staff Counselling Services, the employee assistance programme which is available 24/7, and the University Occupational Health Service. PGR students who teach should also be included in staff wellbeing activities at School level such as awaydays, break-out sessions or wellbeing walks. They should also, as appropriate, be included in meetings or workshops to plan or enhance the school's or programme's provision of teaching and the student experience.

## C. PGR student entitlements and responsibilities

### 5. PGR student entitlements while studying

The regulations in this section cover entitlements for postgraduate research (PGR) students, including information and support they must receive.

In this section:

- Requirement to inform students of their entitlements
- Information for students
- Supervisory support
- Access to research and training environments
- Students with disabilities
- Student feedback on their experience
- Student representation
- Student complaints and appeals

#### Requirement to inform students of their entitlements

- 5.1. PGR students must be made aware of their entitlements through a combination of communications from the University, discussions with supervisors, and information provided by the school and faculty.

#### Information for students

- 5.2. A PGR student must have access to information covering the following:

- 5.2.1. Any fees and other costs related to their study, including any bench fees. Information on fees and costs must be provided before the PGR student starts.
- 5.2.2. Any special requirements linked to their research project, such as the need to travel to perform experimental work or to use specialist libraries.
- 5.2.3. Any relevant practical details, such as on accommodation or on financial matters.
- 5.2.4. Their period of study, how their academic progress will be monitored, and their final submission deadline.
- 5.2.5. The different types of leave entitlements, as set out in the [PGR student leave entitlements section](#).
- 5.2.6. Academic and other forms of support available to them at school, faculty, and at University level.
- 5.2.7. Information on how PGR students can raise individual or collective concerns and how they can make a formal complaint.

- 5.3. PGR students can find information in the [current student webpages](#) and from the [Bristol Doctoral College](#). The [Academic Advice service](#) is also available to students.

## **Supervisory support**

- 5.4. A PGR student is entitled to the following supervisory support:
- 5.4.1. Adequate opportunities to engage with their supervisors, including through formal supervisory meetings.
  - 5.4.2. Feedback from supervisors including detailed comments on written work within an agreed timescale.
  - 5.4.3. Responses from supervisors on queries within an agreed timescale.
- 5.5. A full list of supervisor responsibilities is provided in the [supervisory support and engagement section](#).

## **Access to research and training environments**

- 5.6. A PGR student is entitled to have access to the following research and training environments:
- 5.6.1. A learning infrastructure that supports their progress and the completion of their degree.
  - 5.6.2. A research environment within the University and/or with collaborating institutions that provides expertise and appropriate facilities to support their research activities.
  - 5.6.3. Opportunities for developing research and other skills including through training activities where relevant.
  - 5.6.4. Where feasible, opportunities to participate in teaching with appropriate training and mentoring arrangements – see the [policy for PGR students who teach](#).
- 5.7. More information is provided in the [PGR training and the research environment section](#).

## **Students with disabilities**

- 5.8. PGR students who have a disability are covered by the [policy on supporting disabled students](#).

## **Student feedback on their experience**

- 5.9. PGR students must be given opportunities to give feedback on their experience. This can include:
- 5.9.1. Providing individual feedback to supervisors and other staff.
  - 5.9.2. Contributing to forums that enable collective feedback on student experience.
  - 5.9.3. Participating in student surveys.



## **Student representation**

- 5.10. PGR students must have their views represented as follows:
- 5.10.1. At school and faculty levels, through representative membership at appropriate committees and groups, including student/staff liaison committees.
  - 5.10.2. At University level, through representative membership on Senate and at other appropriate committees and groups.
- 5.11. The [code of practice for student representation for research students](#) provides more information.

## **Student complaints and appeals**

- 5.12. PGR students can make formal complaints as set out in the [student complaints procedure](#)
- 5.13. A PGR student can make an academic appeal as set out in the [assessment regulations](#).

## 6. PGR student leave entitlements

The regulations in this section cover postgraduate research student (PGR) leave entitlements.

In this section:

- Annual leave
- Sick leave
- Short-term exceptional leave
- Leave entitlements for the birth or adoption of a child

### Guidance related to these regulations

- [Guidance for PGR students on absences](#)

### Student entitlements to leave

- 6.1. PGR students are entitled to any relevant types of leave described in this section.
- 6.2. If a PGR student is funded and/or is studying on a student visa, they must make sure that they do not contravene any terms and conditions, or other requirements, when taking leave. Any relevant funder or visa rules take precedence over student leave entitlements.

### Annual leave

- 6.3. A PGR student is entitled to twenty-five days of holiday each year (on a pro-rata basis for part-time students). This is in addition to University closure days. The student must inform their main supervisor (or nominee) when they wish to take annual leave.

### Sick leave

- 6.4. A PGR student is entitled to take time away from study if they are ill or suffer an injury. The PGR student must inform their main supervisor (or nominee) that they are unable to study because of illness or injury.
- 6.5. PGR students must consider requesting a suspension if their illness or injury is having a significant impact on their ability to progress with their studies. The [period of study section](#) sets out the rules on suspension requests.

### Short-term exceptional leave

*Reasons for exceptional leave*

- 6.6. A PGR student is entitled to take short-term exceptional leave in an emergency or on compassionate grounds.
- 6.7. Exceptional leave permits the PGR student to be away from study because of unforeseen circumstances and/or for personal difficulties. Examples of where this type of leave could be required include:
  - 6.7.1. a bereavement;

- 6.7.2. an emergency domestic situation, such as a fire or burglary; and
  - 6.7.3. an immediate caring response for a dependant who has an emergency caring need.
- 6.8. A PGR student can take multiple periods of exceptional leave within a year, but the number must be kept to a minimum. The PGR student should consider requesting a suspension if the situation is ongoing or reoccurring.
- 6.9. PGR students who are funded should refer to the [policy on absence payments for PGR students](#). PGR students must make sure that they are aware of any relevant funder rules.

#### *Notifying the main supervisor*

- 6.10. A PGR student must notify their main supervisor (or a nominee) by email when they take exceptional leave so that there is an electronic record. The email must include a reason for the absence.
- 6.11. A PGR student can notify their main supervisor (or a nominee) retrospectively if their situation does not allow for an earlier communication.
- 6.12. If there is an obligation to report on student absences for visa or other requirements, the school can use the email notification from the student for this purpose.

#### *Length of absence*

- 6.13. A period of exceptional leave must not normally exceed five days in length and must be used to address the immediate situation. A PGR student must request a suspension if a longer period is required.
- 6.14. Bereaved parents are entitled to take a period of two weeks as exceptional leave in the event of the death of a child under 18 years of age. A PGR student in this situation should also consider requesting a suspension.

#### *Exceptional leave and the period of study*

- 6.15. Exceptional leave does not change the period of study or the final submission deadline.
- 6.16. A PGR student should consider requesting a suspension, which will change their final submission deadline, in the following situations:
- 6.16.1. The exceptional leave does not fully address their situation and a longer period is required.
  - 6.16.2. There have been multiple periods of exceptional leave that have had an accumulative impact on the student's ability to study.
- 6.17. The [period of study section](#) sets out the rules on suspension requests.

## **Leave entitlements for the birth or adoption of a child**

### *Eligibility and other considerations*

- 6.18. PGR students are eligible to apply for a suspension to cover any relevant leave entitlements for the birth or adoption of a child.
- 6.19. PGR students do not have the statutory entitlements of employees for maternity, adoption, or other parent leave. The University, however, aims to mirror those statutory entitlements where this is possible.
- 6.20. If a PGR student is funded, they must ensure that they do not contravene their funder's terms and conditions in taking a leave entitlement. Some funders might have a limit of the number and/or length of suspensions.
- 6.21. Funded PGR students must refer to the [policy on absence payments for PGR students](#) in relation to funding rules for leave entitlements.
- 6.22. If a PGR student is studying on a student visa, a suspension linked to a leave entitlement might require the University to withdraw sponsorship with a new visa required when the student returns to study. PGR students must seek advice from [Student Visas](#) about the implications for a student visa as early as possible.

### *Maternity leave*

- 6.23. A PGR student can take maternity leave for the birth of a child in line with the following rules:
- 6.23.1. It can be for a period of up to 52 consecutive weeks of leave.
- 6.23.2. It can commence at any time from the 11<sup>th</sup> week before the expected week of childbirth.
- 6.23.3. It can be for a shorter period than 52 weeks, but a student must take a least two weeks of leave following the birth of a child.

### *Adoption leave*

- 6.24. A PGR student can take adoption leave following the placement of a child with an adoptive parent in line with the following rules:
- 6.24.1. It can be for a period of up to 52 consecutive weeks of leave.
- 6.24.2. It is acknowledged that adoption arrangements might limit the time for planning when adoption leave will start.
- 6.24.3. If two students are jointly adopting, only one member of the couple is eligible for adoption leave. The partner can request partner/other parent leave.
- 6.25. Adoption leave is also applicable where a student fosters a child for adoption or is the intended parent in a surrogacy arrangement.

### *Partner/other parent leave*

6.26. A PGR student can take partner/other parent leave if they are a partner of a person giving birth, a partner of a primary adopter, or is an intended parent in a surrogacy arrangement. The types of partner/other parent leave are as follows:

6.27. 'Paternity' leave, which includes same-sex partners, can be taken in line with the following rules:

6.27.1. It can be for up to two consecutive weeks.

6.27.2. It cannot start before the birth or adoption of a child and must be completed with 56 days of the birth or adoption.

6.28. Parental leave can be taken in line with the following rules:

6.28.1. It can be for up to 50 weeks and can be taken in combination with 'paternity' leave.

6.28.2. It can normally be taken in up to three blocks or as a continuous period and must be completed within 12 months of the birth or adoption of the child.

6.29. Shared parental leave only applies if a PGR student is employed and meets the employing organisation's eligibility criteria. The length of a suspension for shared parental leave must align with the employing organisation's rules.

### *Requesting a suspension linked to a leave entitlement*

6.30. A PGR student must apply for a suspension to cover any leave entitlement linked to the birth or adoption of a child. When applying for a suspension, a PGR student must provide appropriate evidence, such as a maternity certificate (form MAT B1) or evidence of the placement of a child for adoption. The [period of study section](#) sets out the rules on suspension requests.

6.31. A suspension linked to a leave entitlement does not change the [final completion limit](#).

## 7. PGR student responsibilities

The regulations in this section cover the responsibilities of postgraduate research (PGR) students while they are studying.

In this section:

- Requirement to inform students of their responsibilities
- Additional responsibilities for funding and visas
- Understanding available support
- Understanding regulations and policies
- Registration and fees
- Conduct
- Attendance requirement
- Weekly study hours
- Paid work during study
- Personal and professional development
- Completing a research degree

### **Requirement to inform students of their responsibilities**

7.1. PGR students must be made aware of their responsibilities through a combination of communications from the University, discussions with supervisors, and information provided by the school and faculty.

### **Additional responsibilities for funding and visas**

7.2. If a PGR student is funded and/or is studying on a student visa, they must make sure that they comply with the terms and conditions, or other requirements, related to their funding and/or visa.

7.3. An international PGR student who has questions on student visas or immigration matters must contact [Student Visas](#) for advice.

### **Understanding available support**

7.4. A PGR student is responsible for developing an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of their supervisory team and of the wider support framework provided by the University.

7.5. PGR students can find information in the [current student webpages](#) and from the [Bristol Doctoral College](#). The [Academic Advice service](#) is also available to students.

### **Understanding regulations and policies**

7.6. A PGR student must comply with the relevant University regulations, policies and procedures that apply to them. This includes the following:

7.6.1. The regulations and code of practice for research degree programmes.

7.6.2. The [rules and regulations for students](#).

7.6.3. [Academic integrity and research degrees](#).

- 7.6.4. Norms of good research practice relevant to the research area and the [research governance and integrity policy](#).
  - 7.6.5. The [regulations on research misconduct](#).
  - 7.6.6. The [regulations on research practice](#).
  - 7.6.7. Relevant legal and ethical requirements, including in relation to [ethical reviews](#).
  - 7.6.8. The [intellectual property policy for students](#).
- 7.7. A PGR student must ensure that they have the necessary financial support in place to enable them to complete their degree.
- 7.8. A PGR student is responsible for keeping their personal and contact details up to date in their [student record](#).

### **Registration and fees**

- 7.9. A PGR student must register with the University at the beginning of their studies and at the start of each academic year.
- 7.10. A PGR student is responsible for paying any relevant fees and other costs related to their study, such as bench fees.

### **Conduct**

- 7.11. PGR students must conduct themselves in a professional manner, which includes the following requirements:
- 7.11.1. Treating all staff and students at the University with due respect and consideration.
  - 7.11.2. Maintaining effective working relationships with their supervisors and with other staff and students.
  - 7.11.3. Keeping in regular contact with their supervisors including when the student is away from the University or is addressing any corrections or a resubmission required by their examiners. The frequency of contact beyond formal supervisory meetings will vary depending on disciplines and on the student's progress.
  - 7.11.4. Making timely submissions of written work.
  - 7.11.5. Keeping records of their research, their personal development, and of their formal supervisory meetings.
  - 7.11.6. Making appropriate acknowledgment of the contribution of supervisors and others in any publications arising from their research work.

## Attendance requirement

- 7.12. A PGR student must ensure that they are able to attend the University in person as reasonably required by their supervisors and in line with any programme, partnership, funding, or visa requirements. This requirement is in addition to any obligations set out in the [policy for student engagement and attendance](#).
- 7.13. Attendance for part-time PGR students must take their circumstances into account and must be on a pro-rata basis.
- 7.14. In-person attendance for PGR students must not be so low that the student is studying under a de facto distance learning arrangement, as this would disregard the safeguards required in the [policy for research degrees by distance learning](#). In-person attendance must therefore be set at an appropriate level and, as a minimum, must meet the obligations in the [policy for student engagement and attendance](#).
- 7.15. PGR students are exempt from the in-person attendance requirement in the following circumstances:
- 7.15.1. They have arranged to be absent from the University because they are on holiday, they have taken exceptional leave, or they have suspended.
  - 7.15.2. They are ill or have suffered an injury and have informed their main supervisor (or nominee) that they are unable to study.
  - 7.15.3. They are undertaking fieldwork, placements, or research at an external facility with the agreement of their main supervisor.
  - 7.15.4. They are classified as a distance learning student and are governed by the [policy for research degrees by distance learning](#).
  - 7.15.5. They are studying for a joint or dual degree, or as part of a split-site agreement. For this type of degree, a student is normally required to attend the University for at least 30% of their programme. If the student is part of a partnership or a doctoral training entity, they can spend more time away from the University if this is part of the partnership agreement.
  - 7.15.6. They are preparing their dissertation for submission following the completion of their research phase.
- 7.16. If a PGR student has individual exceptional circumstances not covered in the exemption list, the Faculty PGR Director can approve non-attendance if this is supported by the main supervisor.
- 7.17. A PGR student studying on a student visa must seek advice from [Student Visas](#) if they are covered in the exemption list. Some of the exemptions (such as being away from the University to undertake research or to prepare their dissertation for submission) might require a change of study location form.



### **Weekly study hours**

- 7.18. A full-time PGR student must work on their research project and on any other activities related to their studentship for an average of at least 35 hours per week. The average weekly study hours for a part-time student's study will be on a pro-rata basis.
- 7.19. A PGR student is responsible for managing their time. A student's workload will vary at different points in their research project and a student can seek advice from their supervisors on how best to keep on track.

### **Paid work during study**

- 7.20. PGR students are permitted to undertake paid work during their studies. The University recognises that many students rely on paid employment to help fund their studies and/or to gain work experience.
- 7.21. A PGR student undertaking paid work must ensure that this work does not impact on the progress of their studies. A sensible balance between work and study is essential.
- 7.22. A PGR student is responsible for complying with any restrictions on paid work placed on them by any funder or visa rules that are relevant to them.

### **Personal and professional development**

- 7.23. A PGR student is responsible for their personal and professional development. A student might require more guidance and support at the start of their studies but with an expectation that they will progressively take ownership of their own development.
- 7.24. The [personal and professional development policy for PGR students](#) provides more information.

### **Completing a research degree**

- 7.25. A PGR student is responsible for their research and for completing their degree. This includes meeting the following requirements:
- 7.25.1. Agreeing on an intended submission date with their supervisors.
  - 7.25.2. Preparing and submitting their dissertation for examination by their final submission deadline.
  - 7.25.3. Addressing any corrections or a resubmission required by their examiners.

## D. PGR skills development and the research environment

### 8. PGR skills development and the research environment

This section sets out the requirements for supporting PGR students in developing their skills and in having access to an appropriate research environment.

In this section:

- Support for PGR student development
- Minimum requirements for skills development
- Expectations on access to the research environment

The [policy on PGR personal and professional development](#) also relates to this section.

#### **Support for PGR student development**

- 8.1. The University recognises the importance of training and development opportunities for PGR students within a high-quality research environment. These opportunities can enhance a PGR student's effectiveness as a researcher and can underpin their subsequent career.
- 8.2. A PGR student's training and development opportunities must be tailored to their needs, and will include activities provided by schools, faculties, and the [personal and professional development programme](#). Some training and development opportunities might be provided by external sources.
- 8.3. Supervisors must provide guidance and support for PGR students on training and development opportunities with the expectation that the student will progressively take ownership of their own personal and professional development.

#### **Minimum requirements for skills development**

- 8.4. A PGR student must have access to relevant training and development opportunities in research skills and techniques, as well as in wider personal and professional development.
- 8.5. Supervisors must consider their PGR student's training and development needs and assist them in identifying relevant activities at the beginning of the student's period of study. Supervisors and the student must regularly review the student's training and development needs.
- 8.6. Funded PGR students must complete any specific training required by their funder. The supervisors and student must ensure that any funder requirements for training are met within an appropriate timeframe.

## **Expectations on access to the research environment**

- 8.7. The University provides a high-quality research environment in which PGR students develop their skills and conduct work on their research projects.
- 8.8. Schools and faculties must ensure that PGR students have access to an appropriate research environment, including the following:
  - 8.8.1. Opportunities to interact with research-active staff in the student's research area within the University and more widely.
  - 8.8.2. Opportunities to experience and contribute to research activities within the school and faculty, such as presenting research at school seminars.
  - 8.8.3. Access to any necessary facilities or resources to support the student's work. PGR students who are working remotely must retain access to any required facilities or resources.
  - 8.8.4. Access to any external facilities, resources, or expertise that is required for the student's work and that cannot be provided from within the University.

## Policy for PGR personal and professional development

This policy sets out the University approach for the personal and professional development of PGR students. It should be read in conjunction with the other relevant parts of the regulations and codes for research degree programmes, which specifies the University requirements in relation to all PGR students, including on the development of research and other skills.

The policy covers:

- Definition
- Principles
- Identifying and recording personal and professional development

### Definition

1. Personal and professional development for PGR students relates to the acquisition and application of skills and competencies required for researchers to realise their potential and to be successful. The approach of the University of Bristol builds on the [Vitae Researcher Development Framework](#), which is a national reference point in the planning, promotion and support of personal and professional development for researchers in higher education.
2. The external context for personal and professional development includes the [Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#), the [QAA Quality Code](#) and the Roberts' Review [SET for Success](#). In addition, the UK Research and Innovation [Training Grant Guide](#) specifies that appropriate researcher development training is in place.
3. All training and other activities that contribute to the personal and professional development of PGR students are covered by this policy. This relates to the University's [personal and professional development programme](#) and the training provided by faculties and schools, as well as to external training opportunities. PGR students may also develop their personal and professional capabilities as an integral part of their studies, such as giving presentations, working in a team, and through other activities.

### Principles

4. The University is committed to providing personal and professional development opportunities for PGR students to complement and build on the research and other skills gained through pursuing their research.
5. PGR students are encouraged to take advantage of the range of opportunities offered to them so that they develop identified strengths and competencies in a timely manner as they progress through their research project and prepare for the next steps of their career.
6. All PGR students have access to a range of training and developmental activities to become innovative and highly employable researchers. There are a range of opportunities, encompassing the University's [personal and professional development programme](#) and the more discipline-specific training provided through schools and

faculties. In addition, PGR students have access to shared training via GW4, an alliance between the universities of Bath, Bristol, Cardiff and Exeter, plus there may be other external training opportunities. It is recognised that other activities, as well as formal training, may also contribute to a PGR student's personal and professional development.

### **Identifying and recording personal and professional development**

7. It is recognised that PGR students come from a wide range of backgrounds and have a variety of prior experience. PGR students therefore require tailored training and development opportunities based on an analysis of their needs.
8. Supervisors and their students should discuss personal and professional development in their regular meetings. Students may require more guidance and support towards the start of their degree, with the expectation that the student will progressively take ownership of their own personal and professional development. Students are encouraged to seek advice and guidance from other sources in tandem with the supervisory relationship.
9. Personal and professional development is an essential part of creating successful researchers. It is important to acknowledge and discuss the personal and professional development of a PGR student as part of annual progress monitoring. Reflections on training completed and other relevant activities undertaken, as well as planning for the future, should form part of the conversation during annual progress monitoring, forming a holistic evaluation of research progress and of personal and professional development.
10. PGR students may wish to keep a portfolio of their skills and experience in relation to their personal and professional development to assist them in reflecting on their progress and to build up a full picture over the course of their studies.

## E. PGR supervision

### 9. Supervisory roles and appointments

The regulations in this section cover the role of supervisors and how they are appointed for postgraduate research (PGR) students.

In this section:

- Requirement for a supervisory team
- Main supervisor role
- Co-supervisor role
- Head of School role in selecting supervisors
- Appointment criteria for main supervisors
- Appointment criteria for co-supervisors
- Appointment of external supervisors
- Supervisor training and mentors
- Head of School role in changing supervisors
- Temporary supervisor absences
- Breakdown in supervisory relationship
- Requests to change supervisor
- Supervisors who leave

#### Guidance related to these regulations

- [Supporting PGR students: a guide for supervisors.](#)

#### Requirement for a supervisory team

- 9.1. A PGR student must have a supervisory team to provide support throughout their period of registration.
- 9.2. Each supervisory team must have a main supervisor and one or more co-supervisor.
- 9.3. All members of the supervisory team must have defined roles and responsibilities, which must be communicated to the PGR student. The supervisory team must work together to supervise the student.

#### Main supervisor role

- 9.4. The main supervisor is responsible for supervisory support for the PGR student, including ensuring that relevant regulations, policies, and procedures are followed.
- 9.5. The main supervisor usually leads on the key intellectual input in supporting the student's research project, but another member of the supervisory team can take the intellectual lead where this is appropriate.

## **Co-supervisor role**

- 9.6. Co-supervisors must be available to support the PGR student as part of the supervisory team.

## **Head of School role in selecting supervisors**

- 9.7. The Head of School (or nominee) must select supervisors who meet the following conditions:

9.7.1. They have appropriate knowledge and skills.

9.7.2. They fulfil the relevant appointment criteria.

9.7.3. They do not have any actual or potential conflicts of interest in relation to the student. A conflict of interest is where a relationship between a supervisor and a student would prevent or adversely affect the impartiality of the supervision, such as through personal, family, or financial connections.

9.7.4. They have sufficient time designated in their workload allocation for supervision.

- 9.8. The Head of School (or nominee) can request advice from the Faculty PGR Director on the selection of supervisors.

- 9.9. If a PGR student's research requires them to work elsewhere (for example, as part of a collaborative project), the Head of School (or nominee) must ensure that appropriate supervisory arrangements are maintained to cover periods where the student is away from the University.

## **Appointment criteria for main supervisors**

- 9.10. The Head of School (or nominee) must ensure that main supervisors fulfil the appointment criteria for the role. A main supervisor must:

9.10.1. Be a member of academic staff holding an open contract of employment at the University of at least 0.5 FTE (full time equivalent). An open contract of employment carries full employment rights and has no fixed end date. Some staff with proleptic appointments will have open contracts depending on the nature of their individual contract of employment.

9.10.2. Expect to remain in a research-active position within the University for the anticipated duration of the student's registration.

9.10.3. Be reasonably accessible to the PGR student and be able to provide the necessary guidance and support.

9.10.4. Understand school, faculty and University policies and procedures in relation to research students and to supervisory responsibilities.

9.10.5. Have experience of research degree supervision of at least three years and have successfully supervised at least one doctoral student to completion.

9.11. The Head of School (or nominee) can appoint a main supervisor who does not satisfy 9.10.4 and 9.10.5 if an experienced co-supervisor is appointed and if the Faculty PGR Director approves the appointment. The Faculty PGR Director can approve such an appointment if the following conditions are met:

9.11.1. The main supervisor complies with any faculty-specific training.

9.11.2. The experienced co-supervisor acts as a mentor to the main supervisor and will be the first point of contact for the student on non-academic matters.

9.11.3. The Faculty PGR Director is satisfied that the supervisory team can provide an appropriate level of support and guidance for the PGR student.

#### **Appointment criteria for co-supervisors**

9.12. The Head of School (or nominee) can appoint staff from within the University as co-supervisors if they will be reasonably accessible to the PGR student and if they can contribute appropriately to the supervisory team. There are however some categories of staff that require approval from the Faculty PGR Director before they can co-supervise.

9.13. The Faculty PGR Director must approve co-supervisors who are in the following categories of staff. Staff in these categories cannot be main supervisors.

9.13.1. Staff with honorary or visiting status.

9.13.2. Emeritus and retired members of academic staff if they continue to be research active. This is only permitted where the academic continues to co-supervise an existing student and is not allowed for new students.

9.13.3. Staff who are currently registered for a research degree.

9.13.4. Academic staff who have not yet completed their initial service review.

9.13.5. Pathway 2 academic staff who are at level A (Research Associate) or level B (Senior Research Associate).

9.13.6. Professional and technical staff (if they have relevant expertise and experience).



## **Appointment of external supervisors**

- 9.14. The Head of School (or nominee) can appoint external supervisors where this is in accordance with a formal [partnership agreement](#), including in relation to joint or dual awards. External supervisors appointed through a partnership agreement are normally given honorary status.
- 9.15. External supervisors must be reasonably accessible to the PGR student, and they must be able to contribute appropriately to the supervisory team.
- 9.16. The Head of School (or nominee) must ensure that external supervisors are given opportunities to engage in developmental and training activities.

## **Supervisor training and mentors**

- 9.17. All new staff at Lecturer or Senior Lecturer level (or equivalent) must complete a development session to prepare them for supervision.
- 9.18. The Head of School (or nominee) must ensure that new supervisors have a mentor when they start to supervise. Mentors must be established supervisors who have experience of successfully supervising research students to completion and who have a good understanding of relevant regulations, policies, and procedures.

## **Head of School role in changing supervisors**

- 9.19. The Head of School (or nominee) is responsible for changing supervisors if this is necessary to ensure that a PGR student has continuous supervision during their registration. New supervisors must meet the relevant appointment criteria.
- 9.20. The Head of School (or nominee) must consider the requirements of any sponsors when changing supervisors. If a studentship is attached to a particular supervisor or to a specific research grant, it might not be permissible to change the student's supervisors.

## **Temporary supervisor absences**

- 9.21. If a supervisor has a long planned or unplanned absence and is not reasonably accessible to the PGR student, the Head of School (or nominee) must ensure that the student continues to receive adequate supervision. If necessary, temporary supervisory support can be put in place for the duration of the absence.
- 9.22. If a main supervisor has an unplanned absence (for example, through illness), which is anticipated to exceed six months, the Head of School (or nominee) must consider whether to appoint a new permanent main supervisor or to explore other options with the PGR student.

### **Breakdown in the supervisory relationship**

- 9.23. If the relationship between the PGR student and their supervisor/s begins to breakdown, the Head of School (or nominee) must arrange for alternative and independent advice for the student while attempting to resolve the problem.
- 9.24. If the relationship suffers an irreconcilable breakdown, the Head of School (or nominee) must consider whether to appoint a new supervisor/s or to explore other options with the PGR student. The requirements of any sponsors must form part of this consideration.

### **Requests to change supervisors**

- 9.25. A PGR student or a supervisor can make a request a change the supervisory team to the Head of School (or nominee), who will decide whether to approve the request. The Head of School (or nominee) can request advice from the Faculty PGR Director. Changing the supervisory team in these circumstances usually requires the mutual agreement of the student and the supervisors. Any sponsor requirements must also be considered.

### **Supervisors who leave**

- 9.26. If a supervisor moves to another institution or leaves the University for another reason (for example, retirement), the Head of School (or nominee) must explore options with the PGR student and the supervisor.
- 9.27. A supervisor who moves to another institution or who retires can continue as a co-supervisor for the PGR student where this is appropriate, but they cannot be the main supervisor.
- 9.28. If a new supervisor from within the University is required, the Head of School (or nominee) must take all reasonable steps to appoint a replacement. If a new supervisor cannot be identified, it might be more appropriate for the PGR student to transfer to the supervisor's new institution or for the Head of School (or nominee) to explore other options with the student.

## 10. Supervisory support and engagement

The regulations in this section cover supervisory support and the minimum requirements for engagement between supervisors and postgraduate research (PGR) students.

In this section:

- Initial contact
- The supervisory relationship
- First supervisory meeting
- Formal meetings
- Support and guidance
- Support for the dissertation
- Supervisors and the examination
- Support for corrections and resubmissions

### Guidance related to these regulations

- [Supporting PGR students: a guide for supervisors](#)
- [Resources for supervisors](#)

### Initial contact

10.1. The main supervisor must take the initiative in making first contact with the student.

10.2. A PGR student must be given the name and contact details of their main supervisor before they register.

10.3. A PGR student who is studying for a doctoral degree with an integrated taught component might not have a main supervisor until the taught component has been completed. In those cases, a named academic must be appointed to provide appropriate support until a main supervisor is in place.

### The supervisory relationship

10.4. Supervisors and the PGR student share responsibility for developing and maintaining an effective working relationship.

10.5. Supervisors and the PGR student are jointly responsible for maintaining regular and adequate contact including through formal supervisory meetings. Supervisors must also be reasonably accessible to the student outside of the formal meeting schedule to provide advice.

10.6. There are additional considerations for supervision of distance learning students set out in the [policy for research degrees by distance learning](#).

### First supervisory meeting

10.7. The first supervisory meeting will usually be held within a week of the PGR student's registration. This meeting should include the following.

10.7.1. An introduction to the supervisory team, including an overview of their roles and responsibilities.

10.7.2. The PGR student's outline research plan.

10.7.3. A consideration of any specific support or training needs for the PGR student.

10.7.4. If necessary, any sponsorship or other financial arrangements.

10.7.5. If necessary, the role of any integrated taught component and the implications if this component is not successfully completed.

10.8. Supervisors and the PGR student must agree how subsequent supervisory meetings will be organised, including how the individual members of the supervisory team will be involved in those meetings.

### **Formal meetings**

10.9. The main supervisor is responsible for scheduling formal supervisory meetings to review the student's progress. Formal meetings must normally be held at least once a month.

10.10. Any in-person requirements for formal supervisory meetings stipulated in the [policy for student engagement and attendance](#) will apply. Any meetings that are not required to be in person can be held online or by phone instead if this is agreed between the main supervisor and the PGR student.

10.11. The main supervisor is responsible for keeping a record of the date and format (either in person or by other means) of formal supervisory meetings. Where a PGR student is required to provide evidence on their attendance for visa or other purposes, the main supervisor is responsible for providing the necessary evidence on student engagement and attendance.

10.12. Supervisors and the PGR student must have a shared understanding of the purpose of formal supervisory meetings. They must agree on the duration and structure of the meetings and on the topics to be discussed.

10.13. Supervisors and the PGR student must keep the frequency and content of formal supervisory meetings under review. Arrangements must adapt to reflect the student's needs and how their research project is progressing. Where appropriate, formal supervisory meetings can be held more frequently than the usual monthly minimum.

### **Support and guidance**

10.14. Supervisors are responsible for providing the following support and guidance for the PGR student during their studies.

10.14.1. To advise on the academic standards expected for the relevant degree and on the [criteria for award](#).

- 10.14.2. To provide direction on the importance of maintaining [academic integrity](#).
- 10.14.3. To advise on the PGR student's [entitlements and responsibilities](#).
- 10.14.4. To advise on how the PGR student can access pastoral support, including ensuring that the student is aware of the forms of support available within the school, faculty, and University.
- 10.14.5. To review the PGR student's training needs and assist in identifying appropriate training activities, including in relation to personal and professional development.
- 10.14.6. To encourage the PGR student to take up opportunities to network in their research area and to present their work at, for example, conferences and by publishing.
- 10.14.7. To comment on the PGR student's written work and to provide feedback promptly so that there is no impediment to the student's progress.
- 10.14.8. To direct the PGR student to the [Centre for Academic Language and Development](#) where there is a need to develop academic language and literacy skills. The centre offers a range of workshops to help students communicate their research more effectively.

### **Support for the dissertation**

- 10.15. Supervisors are responsible for providing the following support for the student on the dissertation.
  - 10.15.1. To advise on the submission of the dissertation, including on the intended submission date and the final submission deadline.
  - 10.15.2. To advise on the preparations for the dissertation, including commenting on drafts, and to agree on an intended submission date.
  - 10.15.3. To review the PGR student's progress no later than four months before the student's agreed intended submission date. At this point, the supervisors and student must discuss potential examiners if this discussion has not already been held.
  - 10.15.4. To propose suitable examiners in discussion with the PGR student. The main supervisor must complete the appointment form no later than three months before the intended submission date.
  - 10.15.5. To agree with the PGR student an appropriate timetable for discussing drafts of the dissertation. The student must share drafts with supervisors so that there is sufficient time for the supervisors to review the work.

Supervisors must in turn provide timely written feedback so as not to jeopardise the student's intended submission date.

- 10.15.6. To provide guidance to the PGR student on the nature and substance of the written feedback from supervisors where this is necessary.
  - 10.15.7. To provide guidance on the [integration of publications as chapters](#) within the dissertation if supervisors consider that this approach is appropriate.
  - 10.15.8. To make clear to the PGR student that supervisor feedback on the dissertation is only advisory and that the student is responsible for the content of their dissertation and for the decision to submit.
  - 10.15.9. To advise on the University's Open Access commitments and the implications for the PGR student when [depositing the definitive version of their dissertation](#) with the Library, including on the option to request deferred access or redactions for the public release of the dissertation.
- 10.16. Supervisors must provide feedback to the PGR student on their written work, but supervisors are not responsible for providing a full proofreading of the dissertation before it is submitted for examination. Proofreading involves checking text and identifying errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, formatting, and presentation. The PGR student is responsible for ensuring that their dissertation meets the required standard.

### **Supervisors and the examination**

- 10.17. Supervisors must assist the PGR student in preparing for the oral examination, including through advising on opportunities for the student to practise relevant skills through, for example, presenting and being questioned about their research.
- 10.18. Supervisors must not contact the examiners about the examination except to discuss the practical arrangements for the oral examination with the internal examiner (or independent chair if there are only external examiners), including where there are reasonable adjustments or exceptional circumstances.
- 10.19. Supervisors must not discuss the examiners' recommendation with the examiners during any part of the examination process.

### **Support for corrections and resubmissions**

- 10.20. Supervisors are responsible for providing the following support for PGR students who are required to make corrections or to resubmit after the examination.
  - 10.20.1. To provide ongoing guidance to the PGR student on addressing the required corrections or the resubmission.
  - 10.20.2. To agree a work plan with the PGR student so that the revised dissertation is submitted by the deadline.

10.20.3. To maintain contact with the PGR student on at least a monthly basis during the period allowed for corrections or for a resubmission. The student in many cases will be remote from the University at this stage and the onus is on the supervisors to ensure that there is appropriate contact and support. The PGR student also has a responsibility to maintain regular contact with their supervisors.

## F. PGR progress and review arrangements

### 11. Progress monitoring

The regulations in this section cover annual progress monitoring for postgraduate research (PGR) students.

In this section:

- Requirement to monitor student progress
- Annual progress monitoring
- Additional progress requirements
- Reasonable adjustments
- Outcome of the review

#### Guidance related to these regulations

- [Guidance on annual progress monitoring for PGR students](#)
- [Staff guidance on annual progress monitoring](#)

#### Requirement to monitor student progress

- 11.1. The University requires PGR students to make satisfactory progress and to submit for examination within their maximum period of study. PGR students are monitored to ensure that they remain on track and their continued registration depends on satisfactory progress.
- 11.2. Supervisors regularly consider a PGR student's progress. PGR students must also participate in formal annual progress monitoring.
- 11.3. If a PGR student's progress is identified as unsatisfactory as a result of annual progress monitoring or by another source, the student can be provided with [enhanced academic support](#).
- 11.4. If a PGR student's progress remains unsatisfactory after enhanced academic support, the student must enter the [unsatisfactory progress procedure](#).
- 11.5. Any progression rules for integrated taught components of doctoral degrees are covered by the [regulations and code of practice for taught programmes](#).

#### Annual progress monitoring

- 11.6. Annual progress monitoring involves a reviewer/s assessing a PGR student's progress including a part of the student's work. The assessment must include a review meeting with the student.
- 11.7. All PGR students, both full- and part-time, must participate in annual progress monitoring each year. For part-time PGR students, the reviewer/s must adjust their expectations to reflect the student's part-time status.



- 11.8. Annual progress monitoring must fulfil the following requirements:
- 11.8.1. Provide a formal review point for each year of the PGR student's period of study.
  - 11.8.2. Establish whether a PGR student is making satisfactory progress.
  - 11.8.3. Enable the PGR student and main supervisor to express any concerns they have about progress.
  - 11.8.4. Confirm whether the PGR student is well supported and can overcome any practical or academic obstacles in their plans for progressing.
  - 11.8.5. Provide the PGR student with the opportunity to discuss their research, to reflect on their progress, and to gain experience that will be relevant for an oral examination.
  - 11.8.6. Provide an opportunity to discuss the PGR student's personal and professional development in the context of their overall progress.
- 11.9. As a minimum, annual progress monitoring must involve the following:
- 11.9.1. The PGR student must submit a written report or piece of work and complete a review form.
  - 11.9.2. The reviewer/s must make an independent assessment of the PGR student's progress.
  - 11.9.3. The PGR student and their main supervisor must provide comments for the review.
  - 11.9.4. For at least one annual review point, the PGR student must upload a substantial piece of writing to Turnitin. The text-comparison Turnitin report must be included in the review documentation and discussed with the reviewer/s. More information is provided in the [academic integrity and research degrees section](#).

### **Additional progress requirements**

- 11.10. Any subject- or programme-specific requirements, including any funder or sponsor obligations, must be considered as part of annual progress monitoring if this is necessary. The PGR student and the main supervisor must ensure that any additional progress requirements are met.

### **Reasonable adjustments**

- 11.11. PGR Students with a disability can be offered reasonable adjustments for annual progress monitoring, as this is a form of assessment. Students must contact [Disability Services](#) for advice.
- 11.12. If necessary, a Study Support Plan (SPP) from Disability Services will make recommendations for reasonable adjustments appropriate for the PGR student. The

student's supervisors must ensure that the School PGR Director and the reviewer/s are aware of the Study Support Plan.

- 11.13. The reviewer/s, under guidance from the School PGR Director and/or the Faculty PGR Director, must take any recommendations for reasonable adjustments specified in a Study Support Plan into account during annual progress monitoring.

**Outcome of the review**

- 11.14. The School PGR Director (or nominee) must evaluate the comments, feedback and recommendations that result from the review meeting.
- 11.15. The PGR Student must receive a copy of the report on their progress, and they must have an opportunity to comment on the report.
- 11.16. Any participant can escalate significant concerns on annual progress monitoring to the Faculty PGR Director.
- 11.17. As a result of the review, the PGR student can progress to the next year either unconditionally or subject to the completion of specific targets. If the student's progress has been identified as unsatisfactory by a reviewer, the student might be required to receive [enhanced academic support](#).

## 12. Enhanced academic support

The regulations in this section cover enhanced academic support for postgraduate research (PGR) students who have been identified as requiring additional assistance because of concerns with their progress.

In this section:

- Requirement for enhanced academic support
- Decision to start support
- Communication and record keeping
- Plan 1
- Decision at the end of plan 1
- Satisfactory progress
- Unsatisfactory progress

### Requirement for enhanced academic support

- 12.1. Enhanced academic support must be put in place if significant concerns on a PGR student's progress are identified during any stage of the student's period of study. Enhanced academic support must be tailored to the individual student's needs.
- 12.2. The School PGR Director is responsible for the enhanced academic support process. If the School PGR Director has a conflict of interest (for example, they are a supervisor of the PGR student under consideration), another senior member of academic staff in the school must be nominated to perform their role.
- 12.3. If a PGR student is concerned with their progress, they should initially discuss this with their supervisors.

### Decision to start support

- 12.4. Significant concerns on a PGR student's progress can be raised by any of the following role holders:
- 12.4.1. A supervisor,
  - 12.4.2. An annual progress monitoring reviewer,
  - 12.4.3. A PGR programme director,
  - 12.4.4. The School PGR Director, or
  - 12.4.5. Exceptionally, by another academic.
- 12.5. The School PGR Director, in consultation with the supervisors, must consider whether any concerns raised on a PGR student's progress are significant and require enhanced academic support.
- 12.6. When evaluating any concerns raised, the School PGR Director must ask the PGR student whether there are any exceptional circumstances that are impacting on their progress. If there are exceptional circumstances, the student can, for example, request a suspension or request a change in their mode of attendance where this is appropriate.

12.7. After consulting with the supervisors and discussing any exceptional circumstances with the PGR student, the School PGR Director must decide whether the student requires enhanced academic support.

### **Communications and record keeping**

12.8. If a PGR student is required to receive enhanced academic support, the School PGR Director must inform the PGR student and the supervisors in writing. The School PGR Director must also separately inform the Faculty PGR Director.

12.9. If a PGR student with enhanced academic support teaches and is subject to the [policy on postgraduate research students who teach](#), the School PGR Director must check that the requirement in that policy to review the student's teaching load is undertaken.

12.10. The School PGR Director must ensure that:

12.10.1. The PGR student is informed of any progress decisions in person where feasible. If an in-person meeting is not possible, decisions can be communicated in an online meeting or via the student's University email address.

12.10.2. The PGR student is aware that the [unsatisfactory progress procedure](#) is a potential outcome if progress is not back on track at the end of enhanced academic support.

12.10.3. The PGR student is invited to sign off on any work plans related to enhanced academic support.

12.10.4. A written note of all formal and informal meetings with the PGR student covering their progress and enhanced academic support is produced and made available to all participants. The School Office must also hold a copy.

12.11. The enhanced academic support process must proceed as planned even if a PGR student does not acknowledge a progress decision, does not sign off on any action plans, or fails to agree any written meeting notes.

### **Plan 1**

12.12. Once enhanced academic support has started, the supervisors and the PGR student must meet as soon as possible to draw up an action plan ('Plan 1') that must include:

12.12.1. Activities and outputs expected from the student to get them back on track.

12.12.2. The planned frequency and duration of supervisory meetings.

12.12.3. Details on any other support that will be made available.

12.12.4. How progress will be assessed at the end of enhanced academic support.

12.13. The PGR student must complete the expected activities and outputs in Plan 1 within three months (pro-rata equivalent for part-time students) from the start of the action plan.

#### **Decision at the end of Plan 1**

12.14. At the end of the time permitted for Plan 1, the main supervisor and the School PGR Director must decide if the PGR student's progress is satisfactory.

12.15. If the main supervisor and the School PGR Director are unable to reach agreement, the School PGR Director must refer the case to the Head of School (or nominee) for a decision.

#### **Satisfactory progress**

12.16. If the PGR student's progress is satisfactory, the School PGR Director must confirm this decision in writing to the student and the supervisors. The School PGR Director must separately inform the Faculty PGR Director.

12.17. With the PGR student's progress back on track, enhanced academic support ends with the student returning to normal study.

#### **Unsatisfactory progress**

12.18. If the PGR student's progress is unsatisfactory, the School PGR Director must confirm this decision in writing to the student and the supervisors, including confirmation that the unsatisfactory progress procedure will start.

12.19. As the PGR's student's progress remains below the required standard, the School PGR Director must contact the Faculty PGR Director to initiate the [unsatisfactory progress procedure](#).

### 13. Unsatisfactory progress

The regulations in this section cover where a postgraduate research (PGR) student's academic progress remains below the required standard after they have been given enhanced academic support.

In this section:

- Requirement for the unsatisfactory progress procedure
- Communications and record keeping
- Informing sponsors about progress
- Formal progress meeting
- Decision after the formal meeting
- Extended enhanced academic support
- Continued concern stage
- Plan 2
- Decision at the end of Plan 2
- The student is back on track
- An extension to the continued concern stage
- The student's progress remains a concern

#### **Requirement for the unsatisfactory progress procedure**

- 13.1. A PGR student whose progress remains below the required standard after they have received [enhanced academic support](#) must enter the unsatisfactory progress procedure.
- 13.2. If a decision has been taken at any stage to end this procedure and there are later concerns about the PGR student's progress, the student normally restarts enhanced academic support. The student should not automatically return to any stage of the unsatisfactory progress procedure unless the Faculty PGR Director decides that this is necessary.
- 13.3. The Faculty PGR Director is responsible for the unsatisfactory progress procedure. If the Faculty PGR Director has a conflict of interest (for example they are a supervisor of the PGR student under consideration), another senior member of academic staff in the faculty must be nominated to perform the role.
- 13.4. If the School PGR Director has a conflict of interest, a nominee from within the school must perform the School PGR Director role.

#### **Communications and record keeping**

- 13.5. After being contacted by the School PGR Director, the Faculty PGR Director must inform the PGR student that the unsatisfactory progress procedure has started.
- 13.6. The Faculty PGR Director must ensure that:
- 13.6.1. The PGR student is informed of any progress decisions in person where feasible. If an in-person meeting is not possible, decisions can be communicated in an online meeting or via the student's University email address.

13.6.2. The PGR student is advised at every stage of the options available to them, including voluntary withdrawal or requesting a transfer to another degree.

13.6.3. The PGR student is invited to sign off on any work plans related to the unsatisfactory progress procedure.

13.6.4. There is a written note of all formal and informal meetings with the PGR student that cover their progress. All participants must receive a copy of the meeting notes, which must also be filed securely by the Faculty Office.

13.7. The unsatisfactory progress procedure must proceed as planned even if a PGR student does not acknowledge a progress decision, does not sign off on any action plans, or fails to agree any written meeting notes.

### **Informing sponsors about progress**

13.8. The PGR student is responsible for informing any sponsors that they have entered the unsatisfactory progress procedure and for providing the sponsor/s with updates on their progress.

13.9. The main supervisor must provide an honest assessment if a sponsor requests an academic report on the PGR student's progress.

### **Formal progress meeting**

13.10. The Faculty PGR Director is responsible for holding a formal progress meeting as soon as possible after the unsatisfactory progress procedure has started.

13.11. The purpose of the meeting is to:

13.11.1. Consider the causes of the continuing unsatisfactory progress.

13.11.2. Explore whether there are any exceptional circumstances or external causes that are impeding progress.

13.12. The following people must attend the meeting:

13.12.1. The Faculty PGR Director, who will chair the meeting.

13.12.2. The PGR student.

13.12.3. The main supervisor and, if necessary, a co-supervisor/s

13.12.4. The School PGR Director.

13.13. The PGR student can bring a friend or supporter (for example a representative from the [Academic Advice service](#)) to the meeting. The friend or supporter can confer with the student, but they cannot ask or answer questions on behalf of the student during the meeting.

13.14. At the meeting, the PGR student and the supervisor/s can raise any issues in writing and/or verbally that they consider to be impeding the student's progress.

13.15. The Faculty PGR Director must ensure that formal meeting notes are taken and sent to all participants.

#### **Decision after the formal meeting**

13.16. The Faculty PGR Director must consider the issues raised at the formal meeting, including any relevant exceptional circumstances or external causes, and decide how to proceed.

13.17. If the Faculty PGR Director decides that action can be taken to resolve the issues raised, they can extend the enhanced academic support period for the PGR student with the addition of any appropriate measures. These measures could, for example, relate to supervision or to other additional support for the student.

13.18. If the Faculty PGR Director decides that no appropriate action can be taken in relation to the issues raised and that there are no external causes for unsatisfactory progress, they must direct the PGR student immediately to the continued concern stage.

13.19. The Faculty PGR Director must inform the PGR student, the main supervisor, and the School PGR Director of their decision in writing within one week of the formal progress meeting.

13.20. If the PGR student is moving to the continued concern stage, the Faculty PGR Director must inform the student of the potential consequences, which include a transfer to another degree or the termination of the student's registration.

#### **Extended enhanced academic support**

13.21. The Faculty PGR Director can direct that enhanced academic support is extended once only. The extension period must not normally exceed two months (pro-rata equivalent for part-time students).

13.22. The purpose of an extended enhanced academic support period is to:

13.22.1. Allow the student additional time to complete Plan 1.

13.22.2. Include any appropriate measures to address the issues raised at the formal progress meeting.

13.23. At the end of the extended period of enhanced academic support, the main supervisor and the School PGR Director must meet to decide if the PGR student's progress is satisfactory.

13.24. If the main supervisor and the School PGR Director are unable to reach agreement, the School PGR Director must refer the case to the Head of School (or nominee) for a decision.

13.25. The School PGR Director must inform the Faculty PGR Director of the decision.



13.25.1. If the PGR student's progress is satisfactory, the Faculty PGR Director must write to the student, the supervisors, and the School PGR Director to confirm that this procedure will immediately end.

13.25.2. If the PGR student's progress is still not satisfactory, the Faculty PGR Director must write to the student, the supervisors, and the School PGR Director to confirm that the student must immediately enter the continued concern stage.

13.26. If the PGR student is moving to the continued concern stage, the Faculty PGR Director must inform the student of the potential consequences, which include a transfer to another degree or the termination of the student's registration.

### **Continued concern stage**

13.27. When a PGR student enters the continued concern stage, they have failed to demonstrate satisfactory progress for a sustained period. At this stage, the student's registration for their degree is under question.

13.28. If a PGR student in the continued concern stage teaches and is subject to the [policy on postgraduate research students who teach](#), the Faculty PGR Director must check that the requirement in that policy to review the student's teaching load is undertaken. An initial review of teaching load would have happened during enhanced academic support, but a new review is required at this point.

### **Plan 2**

13.29. The supervisors, in consultation with the School PGR Director, must draw up an action plan ('Plan 2'), normally within two weeks of the PGR student being notified that they are entering the continued concern stage.

13.30. Plan 2 must include:

13.30.1. Details specifying what actions need to be taken and who is responsible for each action.

13.30.2. Information about any relevant support and/or training.

13.30.3. The deadline for the completion of the action plan, which must not exceed three months (pro-rata equivalent for part-time students).

13.31. The School PGR Director must write to the PGR student, including a copy of Plan 2, setting out the requirements on the student and the deadline, copying in the Faculty PGR Director.

13.32. The School PGR Director must monitor the PGR student's progress with Plan 2 during the permitted period.

### **Decision at the end of Plan 2**

- 13.33. At the end of the time permitted for Plan 2, the School PGR Director must report the PGR student's progress with the action plan to the Faculty PGR Director. The School PGR Director can include information on any relevant exceptional circumstances when reporting on progress.
- 13.34. The Faculty PGR Director is responsible for deciding the outcome at the end of Plan 2 from the following options:
- 13.34.1. The student is back on track and the unsatisfactory progress procedure ends.
- 13.34.2. The student has exceptional circumstances and is granted an extension to the continued concern stage.
- 13.34.3. The student's progress remains a concern and a Registration Review Panel is required.

### **The student is back on track**

- 13.35. The Faculty PGR Director can decide that the PGR student is back on track if the actions in Plan 2 have been satisfactorily completed within the permitted period and the School PGR Director reports that they are satisfied with the student's progress.
- 13.36. The Faculty PGR Director must confirm this outcome to the student and the supervisors.
- 13.37. With the PGR student's progress back on track, the unsatisfactory progress procedure ends with the student returning to normal study.

### **An extension to the continued concern stage**

- 13.38. The Faculty PGR Director can grant the PGR student an extension to the continued concern stage if the actions in Plan 2 have not been satisfactorily completed but the School PGR Director reports that there are relevant exceptional circumstances.
- 13.39. The Faculty PGR Director can extend the continued concern stage once only. The extension period must not normally exceed two months (pro-rata equivalent for part-time students).
- 13.40. The School PGR Director, the main supervisor and the PGR student must meet to update Plan 2 and to set out how the outstanding actions will be completed in the permitted period. The School PGR Director must send the updated Plan 2 to the Faculty PGR Director.
- 13.41. The Faculty PGR Director must write to the PGR student, including a copy of the updated Plan 2, setting out the requirements on the student and the deadline, copying in the supervisors and the School PGR Director.
- 13.42. The School PGR Director must monitor the PGR student's progress with the updated Plan 2 during the permitted period.

- 13.43. At the end of the time permitted for Plan 2, the School PGR Director must report the PGR student's progress with the action plan to the Faculty PGR Director.
- 13.44. The Faculty PGR Director is responsible for deciding whether there is satisfactory progress after the extended period has ended or whether progress remains a concern.

**The student's progress remains a concern**

- 13.45. The Faculty PGR Director must refer the PGR student to a [registration review panel](#) if the actions in Plan 2 have not been satisfactorily completed and the School PGR Director reports concerns about progress at the end of the permitted period. This period includes, where relevant, any extension given in exceptional circumstances.
- 13.46. The Faculty PGR Director must write to the PGR Student, the supervisors, and the School PGR Director to confirm the decision.
- 13.47. The Faculty PGR Director must notify the Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (PGR), who will set up a registration review panel to consider the PGR student's progress.

## 14. Registration review panels

The regulations in this section cover where a postgraduate research (PGR) student's academic progress remains below the required standard for a sustained period and a registration review panel is required.

In this section:

- Requirement for a registration review panel
- Membership of the panel
- Information for the panel
- The hearing
- The panel's recommendation
- Decision of the Dean

### Requirement for a registration review panel

14.1. A registration review panel forms part of the unsatisfactory progress procedure.

14.2. A PGR student whose progress remains below the required standard after they have ended the continued concern stage must be considered by a registration review panel.

14.3. The Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (PGR) is responsible for registration review panels. If the Associate Pro Vice (PGR) has a conflict of interest (for example, they are a supervisor of the student under consideration), another senior member of academic staff must be nominated to perform the role.

### Membership of the panel

14.4. The Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (PGR) must chair the panel and must appoint two other senior academic staff as members. The panel must fulfil the following criteria:

14.4.1. They have had no previous involvement in the PGR student's progress, including the enhanced academic support or the unsatisfactory progress procedure.

14.4.2. They are independent of the PGR student and the supervisors.

14.4.3. Normally, at least one of the panel members is from the same school as the PGR student.

14.5. The Faculty Head of Student Administration is responsible for the administration of the panel, and they or a nominee normally attend the panel's meetings and the hearing.

14.6. The University Secretary's Office provides a clerk for the panel to make a formal record of the proceedings and to provide advice on procedural matters.

### Information for the panel

14.7. The School PGR Director is responsible for ensure that the school provides the following information to the PGR student and to the panel at least 14 days before the hearing.

- 14.7.1. A covering paper setting out basic information on the case, such as the PGR student's name, their school, the supervisors' names, start date, final submission deadline, the project title, and details on any suspensions.
- 14.7.2. All documents relating to the application and admission of the PGR student, including any contracts or agreements with any funder or sponsor.
- 14.7.3. All meeting notes and letters associated with the PGR student's progress.
- 14.7.4. Annual progress monitoring reports.
- 14.7.5. A summary from the school on the main points of the case, including the significant areas of concern, actions taken in response to the PGR student's progress, and evidence of any exceptional circumstance or external causes.
- 14.8. Once the PGR student has received the information from the school, they must be invited by the panel to respond in writing and to provide any supporting documents at least seven days before the hearing.
- 14.9. The panel can invite the main supervisor to provide a brief statement in writing.
- 14.10. The Faculty Head of Student Administration (or nominee) is responsible for circulating the PGR student's response and the statement from the main supervisor to the panel and the school.

### **The hearing**

- 14.11. The panel will hold a hearing at which the PGR student and representatives from the school, normally including the main supervisor, are entitled to attend.
- 14.12. The PGR student can be accompanied to the hearing by an adviser, friend, or representative. The adviser, friend, or representative can confer with the student, but they cannot ask or answer questions on behalf of the student during the hearing.
- 14.13. The hearing and other meetings of the panel are not routinely recorded, but this can be agreed at the discretion of the chair of the panel.
- 14.14. The panel must consider:
  - 14.14.1. Whether the PGR student can attain the required academic standard within the [maximum period of study](#) specified in regulation.
  - 14.14.2. How much of the PGR student's completed work is at a satisfactory standard. This is particularly relevant if the panel is considering whether to make a recommendation to change the student's registration to another degree.
  - 14.14.3. Whether there are any relevant exceptional circumstances or external causes.
- 14.15. The order of the hearing must be defined by the panel but will usually be conducted as follows:

- 14.15.1. Representatives from the school present their submissions.
- 14.15.2. The PGR student presents their response.
- 14.15.3. The panel asks any questions of the school representatives and the student.
- 14.15.4. The school representatives and the student ask any questions to each other.
- 14.15.5. The school representatives and the student are offered an opportunity to sum up or make any closing remarks, with the student being given the last word.

### **The panel's recommendation**

- 14.16. Following the hearing, the panel will decide on a recommendation. The decision of the panel will be that of the majority of its members.
- 14.17. The panel can make any of the following recommendations:
  - 14.17.1. The PGR student's registration is terminated.
  - 14.17.2. The PGR student's registration is changed to an alternative degree.
  - 14.17.3. The PGR student's registration is unchanged, but the student is required to return to the continued concern stage for a further period.
  - 14.17.4. The PGR student's registration is unchanged, and the unsatisfactory progress procedure ends with the student returning to normal study.
- 14.18. The panel can also make other recommendations on any matter it considers relevant.
- 14.19. The panel must submit a report, including its recommendation/s, to the Dean and the Faculty PGR Director within two weeks of the hearing.

### **Decision of the Dean**

- 14.20. The Dean must decide on the outcome based on the panel's report and recommendation/s within one week of receiving the report.
- 14.21. The Dean must write to the PGR student, the supervisors, and the School PGR Director of the decision. The panel's report must be included in the letter.
- 14.22. The School PGR Director must ensure that the school files the decision letter and the panel's report in the student's file.
- 14.23. A PGR student can appeal against the decision of the Dean in relation to a recommendation from a registration review panel. Further information on appeals is covered in the [assessment regulations](#).

## G. PGR assessment: dissertations, examinations, and outcomes

### 15. Award criteria for research degrees

The regulations in this section cover the criteria postgraduate research (PGR) students must fulfil to be awarded a research degree, including for doctoral degrees by published works.

In this section:

- Award criteria and the examination process
- General criteria for research degrees
- Additional criteria for doctoral degrees
- Additional criterion for a research master's degree

#### Guidance related to these regulations

- [Guidance on examination process for PGR students](#)
- [Guidance for PGR examiners](#)

#### Award criteria and the examination process

- 15.1. Examiners are appointed to assess a PGR student's dissertation (or submission for doctoral degrees by published works) and performance in the oral examination and to determine if the student has achieved the relevant award criteria.
- 15.2. The examiners must assess the scope and depth of the work at the appropriate level for the relevant award criteria. A doctoral degree examination, for example, will be more in depth and will typically require a longer oral examination than that of a research master's degree.
- 15.3. Any integrated taught components connected to a doctoral degree are assessed separately.
- 15.4. There are general criteria covering all research degrees and additional criteria for doctorates and for research master's degrees.

#### ***General criteria for research degrees***

- 15.5. A PGR dissertation (or submission for a doctoral degree by published work) must:
- 15.5.1. Embody the results of research carried out by the student with the work produced being reasonably expected from a capable and diligent student in the period of study specified in regulation.
  - 15.5.2. Consist of the student's own account of their investigations.
  - 15.5.3. Make clear where information has been derived, the extent to which the work of others has been used, and the areas that the student claims to be original.

- 15.5.4. Demonstrate critical judgement in relation to the student's own work and to the work of other researchers in the field.
- 15.5.5. Present an integrated structure and a coherent argument.
- 15.6. Through a combination of the dissertation (or submission for a doctoral degree by published work) and the oral examination, a PGR student must:
  - 15.6.1. Demonstrate an adequate knowledge and understanding of the discipline, the context in which the research is grounded, and the literature relevant to the research.
  - 15.6.2. Demonstrate verbally and in writing an ability to put forward arguments in an appropriate form.

***Additional criteria for doctoral degrees***

- 15.7. In addition to the general criteria for all research degrees, doctoral degrees by dissertation are awarded when the doctoral student fulfils the following criteria:
  - 15.7.1. The dissertation represents a significant and original contribution to knowledge that is worthy of publication or dissemination in whole or in part.
  - 15.7.2. The dissertation and the performance in the oral examination demonstrate the student's capacity to pursue original research based on a good understanding of the relevant techniques and concepts.
- 15.8. In addition to the general criteria for all research degrees, doctoral degrees by published works are awarded when the following criteria are fulfilled:
  - 15.8.1. The published works are coherent and represent a significant and original contribution to knowledge.
  - 15.8.2. The commentary demonstrates the coherence, significance, and originality of the published works.
  - 15.8.3. The commentary and published works, together with the performance in the oral examination, demonstrate the student's capacity to pursue original research based on a good understanding of the relevant techniques and concepts.
- 15.9. Originality for a doctoral degree means a contribution to learning. For example:
  - 15.9.1. Discovering new knowledge or applying existing knowledge to new situations.
  - 15.9.2. Connecting previously unrelated facts, the development of new theory, or the revision of previously held views.
  - 15.9.3. Developing new research methods or techniques.



***Additional criterion for a research master's degree***

15.10. In addition to the general criteria for all research degrees, research master's degrees should represent a contribution to knowledge.

## 16. Academic integrity and research degrees

The regulations in this section cover academic integrity considerations for postgraduate research (PGR) students, including plagiarism reviews for dissertations submitted for examination.

In this section

- The principles of academic integrity
- Referencing and plagiarism
- Ethical standards
- Previously submitted work
- Previously published work
- Proofreading of dissertations
- Annual progress monitoring and Turnitin
- Plagiarism reviews and examination
- Alternative plagiarism review

### Guidance related to these regulations

- [Guidance on referencing](#)
- [Guidance on Turnitin](#)

### The principles of academic integrity

- 16.1. PGR students are expected to commit to the values of academic integrity and to uphold high standards. The core values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage form the foundations of the University's approach.
- 16.2. The [academic integrity policy](#) sets out the University's approach and defines a common understanding of academic integrity, including on its values and on responsibilities.
- 16.3. Academic integrity is integral to university study and academic life. PGR students must therefore maintain academic integrity in all areas of their studies, including in their dissertation and examination.
- 16.4. The University combines developing and nurturing academic integrity with a recognition that transgressions undermine its core values. Academic misconduct is taken seriously, and will be investigated where necessary, with a set of penalties available when academic misconduct has been proven.

### Referencing and plagiarism

- 16.5. PGR students must include citations and references in their work in a style appropriate for their discipline.
- 16.6. PGR students must not plagiarise in their dissertation. Plagiarism is presenting the work of others as one's own either intentionally or by omission.

## **Ethical standards**

- 16.7. PGR students must maintain ethical standards in their work and, where necessary, obtain [ethical approval](#) for their research.
- 16.8. PGR students must ensure that their work is presented accurately. Data, results, evidence, research, and other material must not be falsified or distorted.

## **Previously submitted work**

- 16.9. PGR students must not include work in their dissertation that they have already submitted for an academic award at the University of Bristol or at any other degree awarding body except where either of the following conditions are met.
- 16.9.1. The previously submitted work is re-used in a limited way and only covers short sections of material.
- 16.9.2. The previously submitted work is significantly changed and developed so that it has transformed into new work. For example, a substantial reanalysis of material or data from a previous study.
- 16.10. A PGR student must discuss the inclusion of previously submitted work with their supervisors and the student must provide appropriate references in their dissertation including details of any previous award. It must be clear to the examiners where work has been re-used and from where it originated.

## **Previously published work**

- 16.11. PGR students are encouraged to publish their work, and this can happen before they submit for examination. Students can include their own published work, either in whole or in part, in their dissertation with appropriate referencing. If a student's published works are used as full chapters in the dissertation, this must be in line with the [policy on integrating publications as chapters in a PGR dissertation](#).

## **Proofreading of dissertations**

- 16.12. PGR students are responsible for the content of their dissertation and should in most cases proofread their own work, as this is an essential skill in academic writing. Proofreading involves checking text and identifying errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, formatting, and presentation.
- 16.13. A PGR student's supervisors will provide feedback on the development of the dissertation, but they are not required to provide a full proofreading of the dissertation before it is submitted for examination.
- 16.14. PGR students can where needed seek assistance with proofreading from a third party, such as a professional proofreader, another student, a friend, or a family member. Third-party proofreading is only permitted where it does not alter the intellectual content of the dissertation.
- 16.15. A third-party proofreader must not add to the content of the dissertation in any way. They must not amend or suggest ideas, arguments, subject matter, or comment on the structure of the dissertation, as this would compromise the authorship of the work.

- 16.16. A third-party proofreader can only suggest changes in relation to spelling, punctuation, grammar, formatting, and presentation. They can suggest changes to the presentation of references that are poorly formatted, but they cannot propose new references.
- 16.17. PGR students remain responsible for the content of their dissertation, and they must not accept advice from a third-party proofreader beyond the defined parameters. Failure to follow these defined parameters could constitute plagiarism.
- 16.18. Enhanced proofreading assistance can form part of a reasonable adjustment for disability.

### **Annual progress monitoring and Turnitin**

- 16.19. As part of annual progress monitoring, PGR students must upload a substantial piece of writing (for example, a draft chapter or report) to Turnitin for at least one of their [annual progress monitoring reviews](#). The text-comparison Turnitin report must be included in the review documentation and discussed with the reviewer/s.
- 16.20. Where there are contractual, security or safety concerns about sensitive material, the main supervisor can decide that it is not appropriate to upload the substantial piece of writing to Turnitin, which is a third-party platform. In these cases, the decision must be recorded, and the supervisors must provide a manual check on referencing and plagiarism instead.

### **Plagiarism reviews and examination**

- 16.21. All research degree dissertations submitted for examination (including submissions for doctoral degrees by published work) must be reviewed for plagiarism. The dissertation will not be circulated to examiners until the review has been successfully completed.
- 16.22. As part of the submission process, students must upload a copy of their dissertation to Turnitin. In exceptional circumstances, an alternative plagiarism review without an upload to Turnitin can be conducted with the approval of the Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (PGR).
- 16.23. The school must nominate an academic to review the text-comparison reports for dissertations uploaded to Turnitin. A reviewer is usually nominated for a sustained period covering reviews for multiple students.
- 16.24. So that the plagiarism review is independent of the student and of the examination, another academic must be nominated by the school if the normal reviewer is a supervisor or the internal examiner for the student under review.
- 16.25. The nominated reviewer must review the Turnitin report within ten working days of the student's notification to the school that the dissertation has been uploaded.
- 16.26. If the nominated reviewer finds no suspected plagiarism and/or minor referencing problems in the dissertation, the school must notify the student and the Academic

Quality and Policy Office ([pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk)). This permits the Academic Quality and Policy Office to circulate the dissertation to approved examiners.

- 16.27. If the nominated reviewer finds suspected plagiarism and/or minor referencing problems in the dissertation, the reviewer must follow the [policy on academic misconduct for PGR examinations and awards](#). The nominated reviewer and the school cannot request that the PGR student makes changes to the dissertation outside of the requirements set out in the policy.

#### **Alternative plagiarism review**

- 16.28. A PGR student and/or their main supervisor can request an alternative plagiarism review on the appropriate form if there are contractual, security or safety obligations that mean information cannot be held on Turnitin, which is a third-party organisation.
- 16.29. The Faculty PGR Director must review the request and make a recommendation before submitting the form, via the Academic Quality and Policy Office, to the Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (PGR) for a decision.
- 16.30. The Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (PGR) must communicate their decision to the student, main supervisor and to the Faculty PGR Director.
- 16.31. If the request is approved, a supervisor must undertake a manual plagiarism review of the dissertation in lieu of the standard review. The supervisor must inform the Academic Quality and Policy Office ([pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk)) when they have completed the manual review and are satisfied that there is no plagiarised material in the dissertation.

## 17. Dissertation content and format

The regulations in this section cover the content and format of a research degree dissertation (thesis) submitted for examination and subsequently deposited with the Library.

In this section:

- General requirements
- English language requirements
- Dissertation length
- Creative works
- Professional practice
- Ethical approval
- Preliminary pages
- Main body of the text
- Digital media and research data

### General requirements

- 17.1. PGR students must [submit](#) a dissertation based on their research activities. Students are responsible for the content of their dissertation and for the decision to submit for examination. Comments from supervisors on the contents of the dissertation are only advisory.
- 17.2. The dissertation together with the oral examination must fulfil the [relevant criteria](#) for the award of a research degree.
- 17.3. The dissertation must comply with the University's [academic integrity standards](#).
- 17.4. Following their award, PGR students must deposit the definitive version of their dissertation with the Library for [public access](#). The dissertation will be publicly available in full unless a request to defer or to redact is approved.
- 17.5. Where stated, the regulations on dissertation content and format also apply to submissions for doctoral degrees by published work.

### English language requirements

- 17.6. PGR students must submit their dissertation or submission by published work in English, except for:
- 17.6.1. Students in the School of Modern Languages, who can choose to submit their dissertation in the language of the culture studied.
- 17.6.2. In exceptional cases, students who have agreement from the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students) to submit their dissertation in another language. In these cases, the student must make a request to the Faculty PGR Director, who will make a recommendation to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students) for a decision.
- 17.7. Where a dissertation is submitted in a language other than English, it must contain an extended summary in English. For example, a summary must be at least 5,000 words for a Doctor of Philosophy dissertation.

## Dissertation length

17.8. The maximum word counts for dissertations are listed below. References, appendices and lists of contents are excluded from the word count.

Degree type	Maximum word count
Doctorates	
• Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)	80,000 words*
• Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS)	30,000 words
• Doctor of Education (EdD)	45,000 words
• Doctor of Educational Psychology (DEdPsy)	45,000 words
• Engineering Doctorate (EngD)	80,000 words
• Doctor of Medicine (MD)	60,000 words
Research master's degrees	
• Master of Music (MMus)	<a href="#">Separate rules</a>
• Master of Philosophy (MPhil)	
○ Arts	25,000 words*
○ Social Sciences and Law	30,000 words
• Master of Science by Research (MScR)	
○ Arts	25,000 words
○ Other faculties	30,000 words

\* There are [separate rules](#) on word counts for the PhD in Musical Composition, for combined PhDs in musicology and composition and for the MPhil in Musical Composition.

17.9. [Doctoral degrees by published works](#) have separate rules on the word count.

17.10. Examiners can refuse to examine a dissertation if it exceeds the maximum word count. Examiners can also direct the student to reduce the word count as part of required corrections after the examination.

## Creative works

17.11. PGR students can submit a dissertation containing creative works alongside a written commentary.

17.12. The commentary, which will form the focus for examination, must be of sufficient length to provide an extensive analytical account setting the creative works in their research context. For example, a commentary for a Doctor of Philosophy must be at least 30,000 words.

17.13. There are [separate rules](#) for dissertations that contain musical composition for the Doctor of Philosophy, the Master of Music, and the Master of Philosophy degrees.

17.14. The definitive version of the dissertation deposited with the Library must combine a permanent record of the creative works with the commentary.

## Professional practice

17.15. PGR students can, where relevant, include material related to the professional practice in which their research is embedded, such as portfolios of work and project

reports. This must be accompanied by an extensive commentary that provides a critical evaluation that sets the material in its academic and research context. The commentary will form the focus of the examination.

### **Ethical approval**

17.16. If a PGR student has obtained ethical approval for their research, they must include a statement in their dissertation including the date approval was granted and any approval reference number/s.

### **Preliminary pages**

17.17. PGR students must include preliminary pages at the beginning of their dissertation. This includes submissions for doctoral degrees by published works. The preliminary pages must be presented on separate pages and in this order.

17.17.1. Title page.

17.17.2. Abstract.

17.17.3. Dedication and acknowledgements. This page is optional.

17.17.4. Covid-19 statement. This page is optional.

17.17.5. Author's declaration.

17.17.6. Contents page/s.

#### *Title page*

17.18. PGR students must arrange the title page as follows.

17.18.1. The title of the dissertation at the top of the page. If the dissertation is in a language other than English, the title must be given in that language and in English.

17.18.2. The student's name below the title in the centre of the page.

17.18.3. The following statement at the bottom of page. 'A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements for award of the degree of ... in the Faculty of ...' followed by the name of the school and month and year of submission.

17.18.4. The word count (which excludes references, appendices and lists of contents) at the bottom right-hand side of the page.

#### *Abstract*

17.19. PGR students must include an abstract of no more than 300 words. If the dissertation is in a language other than English, the abstract must be given in that language and in English.



### *Dedication and acknowledgements*

17.20. This page is optional. PGR students can include a personal dedication and acknowledgment of the role of others in their work and life.

### *Covid-19 statement*

17.21. This page is optional. PGR students can include a Covid-19 statement in their examination copy to highlight how restrictions related to the pandemic modified or limited their research and the contents of their dissertation. The [policy on research degree dissertations and the impact of Covid-19 restrictions](#) provides more information.

### *Author's declaration*

17.22. PGR students must include the following declaration unless their degree is part of partnership for a dual or joint award with another University. Students must print their name rather than sign the declaration.

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes* and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is my own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: [print name]. DATE:

17.23. Where the degree is part of a dual or joint award partnership with another University, students must include the following declaration. Students must print their name rather than sign the declaration.

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes* and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award (other than one authorised as part of a dual or joint award approved in advance by the University). Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is my own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: [print name]. DATE:

### *Contents page/s*

17.24. PGR students must include a contents page/s. The contents list must indicate the page number for each item and must include:

17.24.1. Chapters, including any sections and subsections.

17.24.2. A reference list.

17.24.3. The bibliography.

17.24.4. An abbreviation list.

17.24.5. Any appendices.

17.24.6. A list of tables and illustrations covering the tables, photographs, diagrams, etc. in the order they appear in the text and with the relevant page number.

### **Main body of the text**

#### *Text and numbering*

17.25. PGR students must present the text in the dissertation in double or 1.5 line spacing and in a font size that ensures readability. The pages must be numbered consecutively at the bottom centre of the page.

#### *Referencing style*

17.26. PGR students must set out citations and references in a style appropriate for the discipline and which is consistent throughout the dissertation.

17.27. If a PGR student uses their published works as full chapters in the dissertation, they must follow the [policy on integrating publications as chapters in a PGR dissertation](#).

### **Digital media and research data**

17.28. For the examination version of dissertations, PGR students must submit any digital media, such as databases or digital images, appended to the dissertation in a standard format. The student must include a statement in their dissertation covering the programme/s used and the file size/s.

17.29. For the definitive version deposited with the Library, PGR students must combine digital media files with the dissertation text in a single pdf file where this is practicable.

## 18. Submission and circulation of dissertations

The regulations in this area cover the submission and circulation of a research degree dissertation (thesis) for examination.

In this section

- Timing of submission
- Early submission
- How students submit
- Altering a dissertation after submission
- Circulation to examiners

### Guidance related to these regulations

- [Guidance on how to submit for PGR students](#)

### Timing of submission

18.1. PGR students work towards an intended submission date (the day they plan to submit), which must be on or before their final submission deadline (the last day that they are permitted to submit).

#### *Intended submission date*

18.2. PGR students and their supervisors must agree on an intended submission date. At least six months before this intended submission date, students must prepare a detailed timetable of their final submission preparations in consultation with their supervisors.

#### *Final submission deadline*

18.3. PGR students must submit on or before their final submission deadline. A student who does not submit by their deadline will be deemed to have withdrawn because they will have run out of time. A dissertation submitted late will not be examined.

18.4. The final submission deadline is the maximum [period of study](#) for the relevant degree plus any approved periods of suspension or extension.

18.5. If a PGR student's final submission deadline is on a weekend, a bank holiday or a University closure day, the student can submit on the next working day. This is so that there are staff available to assist with the submission if there are any technical difficulties.

18.6. PGR students who experience unforeseen circumstances near their final submission deadline that impact on their ability to submit can request an [emergency extension](#) from the Faculty PGR Director.

### **Early submission**

18.7. The earliest a doctoral student can submit without special permission is three months (pro-rata for part-time students) before the end of the minimum [period of study](#).

18.8. The earliest a research master's student can submit without special permission is one month (pro-rata for part-time students) before the end of the minimum [period of study](#).

- 18.9. PGR students can request special permission to submit earlier from the Faculty PGR Director.
- 18.10. The Faculty PGR Director must decide whether an early submission is appropriate and must communicate their decision to the student and to the Academic Quality and Policy Office ([pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk)).
- 18.11. The Academic Quality and Policy Office will not accept an early submission for examination unless the Faculty PGR Director has approved a request from the student.
- 18.12. A PGR student who is permitted to submit early must still pay their tuition fees. Early submission does not reduce the fee.

### **How students submit**

- 18.13. PGR students must submit two electronic copies of their dissertation.
- 18.13.1. A copy for examination must be emailed to the Academic Quality and Policy Office ([pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk)). This counts as the formal submission and must be sent on or before the student's final submission deadline.
- 18.13.2. A copy must be uploaded to Turnitin for a plagiarism review. This counts as a pre-examination requirement. In exceptional cases, the Turnitin upload can be replaced by an alternative plagiarism review. More information on plagiarism reviews is in the [academic integrity and research degrees section](#).
- 18.14. The text in the examination and Turnitin copies must be identical. PGR students can remove images and other non-textual aspects, or reduce the quality of the images, from the Turnitin copy to meet the file size limit if necessary.
- 18.15. PGR students can submit creative and other works for examination in physical form alongside an electronic file containing the written element of their dissertation.

### **Altering a dissertation after submission**

- 18.16. PGR students cannot alter their dissertation after they have submitted except where they are required to do so because their work has been found to minor referencing problems, plagiarism, and/or other academic misconduct, or where there are technical and/or presentational issues with the submitted file.
- 18.17. If a PGR student realises that there are technical and/or presentational issues in the submitted file, they can notify the Academic Quality and Policy Office ([pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk)) of the problem. A student can only replace their dissertation with an altered version if the following conditions are met:
- 18.17.1. The changes are only technical and/or presentational, such as a corrupt file, a contents table that has not populated correctly or problems with the

formatting. It is permissible to include a small amount of material that was inadvertently missed from the original file if this material has not been altered since the original submission.

18.17.2. The changes do not alter or add to text or data in the main body of the dissertation unless the changes relate to a small amount of material that was inadvertently missed from the file.

18.17.3. The dissertation has not yet been circulated to examiners.

18.17.4. The student provides a statement to the Academic Quality and Policy Office describing the changes made to the dissertation. If the changes include material that had been inadvertently missed from the file, the statement must confirm that this information has not been revised since the original submission.

18.17.5. The Academic Quality and Policy Office accepts that only permitted changes have been made.

18.18. As changes to the submitted file will not usually alter text in the main body of the dissertation, the replaced file will normally only relate to the examination copy and not to the Turnitin copy. If the changes include the addition of text that had been inadvertently missed from the file, the updated version must be uploaded to Turnitin for a new plagiarism review.

### **Circulation to examiners**

18.19. PGR students and their supervisors must not send the dissertation to examiners. Only the Academic Quality and Policy Office can circulate the dissertation or give consent for its circulation by another route.

18.20. The Academic Quality and Policy Office will circulate the dissertation to approved examiners if the dissertation was submitted on time and when the plagiarism review has been successfully completed.

18.21. An independent chair, if appointed, is not expected to read the dissertation in preparation for the oral examination, but they can request an electronic copy from the Academic Quality and Policy Office if this will assist them in undertaking their role.

## 19. Appointing examiners and independent chairs

The regulations in this section cover the selection and approval of internal examiners, external examiners, and independent chairs for research degree examinations.

In this section:

- When to select examiners and independent chairs
- Role of examiners and independent chairs
- The examining panel
- Students who are also members of staff
- General requirements for examiners
- Internal examiners
- External examiners
- Examiners from partner institutions
- External examiners for multiple research master's examinations
- Independent chairs
- Approving appointments

### Guidance related to these regulations

- [Guidance on examination process for PGR students](#)
- [Guidance for PGR examiners](#)
- [Guidance for staff on the PGR pre-examination process](#)

### When to select examiners and independent chairs

19.1. PGR students and their supervisors must agree on an intended submission date and discuss potential examiners. The main supervisor must propose examiners and, if necessary, an independent chair on the appointment form no later than three months before the agreed intended submission date.

### Role of examiners and independent chairs

19.2. Examiners are fundamental to the integrity of examinations and to the academic standards of research degrees. External examiners also assure that research degrees at the University of Bristol remain comparable with other institutions.

19.3. Examiners assess a PGR student's dissertation (or submission for a doctoral degree by published works) and performance in the oral examination and determine if the student has achieved the relevant [award criteria](#).

19.4. An independent chair, if appointed, oversees the examination process but is not an examiner.

19.5. Examiners and, if appointed, the independent chair are collectively responsible for ensuring that the examination is conducted appropriately and in line with regulation.

### The examining panel

19.6. The examining panel must consist of a minimum of two examiners of which at least one must be an external examiner.

- 19.7. A typical examining panel will comprise one internal examiner and one external examiner, but other configurations are permissible.
- 19.8. Additional examiners could be appointed, for example, if the examination of a dissertation requires wider expertise or if a larger panel is required by a partnership agreement.
- 19.9. An independent chair will be appointed to oversee an examination in specific circumstances, but they are not required for all examinations.

#### **Students who are also members of staff**

- 19.10. If a PGR student is a member of staff at the University of Bristol (or if they may become a member of staff before they are awarded), the examining panel will usually consist of two external examiners without an internal examiner.
- 19.11. The Faculty PGR Director can waive the requirement to appoint two external examiners if they are satisfied that there is no perceived conflict of interest or any other reason that could undermine the impartiality of an internal examiner.

#### **General requirements for examiners**

- 19.12. Examiners must be competent and respected individuals in their area of study.
- 19.13. Examiners must hold a research degree or have other relevant expertise.
- 19.14. An individual who is registered for a research degree cannot be appointed as an examiner.
- 19.15. The examining panel (including the independent chair if appointed) must collectively have adequate experience of examining research degrees.
- 19.16. Any examiner who has not completed the examination of at least two research degree students is deemed to be inexperienced. If any examiner is inexperienced, an independent chair must be appointed.

#### **Internal examiners**

- 19.17. An internal examiner must normally be a non-probationary member of academic staff at the University of Bristol holding an open contract of employment of at least 0.5FTE.
- 19.18. Exceptionally, an honorary, visiting, or emeritus member of academic staff at the University of Bristol, who meets the other appointment criteria, can be selected as an internal examiner but normally with the addition of an independent chair.
- 19.19. An internal examiner must fulfil the following criteria:
  - 19.19.1. They must not have any connection with the student, the research project, or the supervisors, that could be seen as undermining their ability to make a fair and impartial assessment of the student's work.

- 19.19.2. They must understand the regulations and procedures for examination, which can be with the assistance of an independent chair if necessary.
- 19.20. If a proposed internal examiner has been a reviewer for an annual progress monitoring review for the student, the Faculty PGR Director must be satisfied that their level of involvement with the research project has not undermined their ability to make a fair and impartial assessment.

### **External examiners**

- 19.21. An external examiner must fulfil the following criteria:
- 19.21.1. They must have the required expertise in the student's research area.
  - 19.21.2. They must be a member of academic staff at another institution or, where appropriate, from professional practice or industry.
  - 19.21.3. They must not have any connection with the student, the research project, the supervisors, or with the University of Bristol could be seen as undermining their ability to make a fair and impartial assessment of the student's work.
- 19.22. Emeritus staff from other universities can be appointed as an external examiner if they are still appropriately active in the field.
- 19.23. University of Bristol honorary, visiting, and emeritus staff cannot be external examiners, but they can exceptionally be internal examiners.
- 19.24. An individual who has held a post at the University of Bristol, including in honorary or visiting roles, cannot be an external examiner until five years after they have left the University.
- 19.25. An individual cannot be appointed as an external examiner more than twice in one year except in either of the following circumstances:
- 19.25.1. If an external examiner has been appointed for multiple research master's examinations.
  - 19.25.2. If the Faculty PGR Director has approved an exemption to this rule because of the specific circumstances of an examination.
- 19.26. External examiners cannot be appointed through a reciprocal arrangement with another institution unless this relates to a partnership agreement.

### **Examiners from partner institutions**

- 19.27. An individual from a partner institution can be appointed as an external examiner if they do not have any connection with the student, the research project, the supervisors, the University of Bristol, or with the partnership that could be seen as undermining their ability to make a fair and impartial assessment of the student's work.



- 19.28. Individuals from other institutions can be appointed as an internal examiner if this is specified in a partnership agreement. In these cases, an independent chair and/or an additional internal examiner from the University of Bristol must also be appointed.
- 19.29. Where a partnership agreement permits academics from another institution to be an internal examiner, individuals from that institution cannot be appointed as an external examiner for any students linked to that partnership.
- 19.30. An individual who was employed by a partner institution where they were permitted to be an internal examiner cannot be appointed as an external examiner for students linked to the partnership until five years after the individual has left that partner institution.

### **External examiners for multiple research master's examinations**

- 19.31. The Faculty PGR Director can appoint an external examiner for a period of three years to cover multiple research master's examinations. An external examiner appointed under this approach can examine up to 15 students within those three years.
- 19.32. An extended appointment can cover, for example, a cohort-based research master's programme or a research area where several research master's students are registered at the same time.
- 19.33. An external examiner with an extended appointment must still be approved on the appointment form for each individual student.
- 19.34. At the end of an extended appointment, an external examiner cannot be re-appointed to this role for at least five years.

### **Independent chairs**

- 19.35. An independent chair must be appointed in any of the following circumstances:
- 19.35.1. There are only external examiners on the examining panel.
  - 19.35.2. An examiner/s is inexperienced (they have not completed the examination of at least two research degree students).
  - 19.35.3. The Faculty PGR Director decides that an academic with extensive experience is required to oversee the examination.
- 19.36. An independent chair must fulfil the following criteria:
- 19.36.1. They must be an academic member of staff employed by the University of Bristol and have a good understanding of examination regulations and procedures.
  - 19.36.2. They must have extensive experience of oral examinations as an examiner. The Faculty PGR Director will decide on the level of experience required, but the independent chair's experience must at least exceed the level required to be an experienced examiner.

19.36.3. They must not have any significant connections to the student or to the research project.

19.37. An individual who is registered for a research degree cannot be appointed as an independent chair.

19.38. Where an independent chair is required, the main supervisor can ask the School PGR Director to recommend an appropriate academic to undertake the role.

### **Approving appointments**

19.39. The Faculty PGR Director, on behalf of Senate, appoints examiners and independent chairs for research degrees.

19.40. The School PGR Director agrees the proposed examiners and, if necessary, the independent chair before the Faculty PGR Director grants formal approval.

19.41. If the School PGR Director or the Faculty PGR Director has a close link to the student – for example, if they are a supervisor or a proposed examiner – they must nominate another senior member of academic staff in the school or faculty to approve appointments.

## 20. Oral examination (viva)

The regulations in this section cover the preparations and conduct of an oral examination (viva) for a postgraduate research (PGR) student, including for doctoral degrees by published works.

In this section:

- Requirement and purpose
- Impartiality and fairness
- Practical arrangements
- Reasonable adjustments and exceptional circumstances
- Recording oral examinations and other special arrangements
- Location
- Observers
- Conduct of the examination
- Academic misconduct and the oral examination.

### Guidance related to these regulations

- [Guidance on examination process for PGR students](#)
- [Guidance for PGR examiners](#)

### Requirement and purpose

- 20.1. Research degree examinations require an individual oral examination, which should normally be conducted within four months of submission. An oral examination is required even if the examiners identify significant problems during their initial assessment of the dissertation.
- 20.2. The oral examination allows the examiners to:
  - 20.2.1. Assess whether the student has achieved the relevant [award criteria](#).
  - 20.2.2. Question the student on the substance of their work.
  - 20.2.3. Assess the ability of the student to present and defend intellectual arguments.
  - 20.2.4. Assess the student's knowledge and understanding of the discipline and the relevant literature.
  - 20.2.5. Verify that the student's work is their own and to assess the extent of any collaboration.
- 20.3. If a PGR student is unable to participate in an oral examination in the event of their death, severe illness or other debilitating condition, the [policy on failure to complete assessment for research degrees](#) should be considered.
- 20.4. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students) or nominee can exempt a PGR student from attending an oral examination for other significant causes. An

appropriate alternative to the oral examination would be required to allow the examiners to assess the student.

- 20.5. The [policy on failure to complete assessment for research degrees](#) and exemptions from the oral examination are separate from reasonable adjustments related to disability and from exceptional circumstances that might affect a student's performance at the oral examination. Reasonable adjustments and exceptional circumstances are covered by their own rules.
- 20.6. The examiners complete preliminary reports before the oral examination and a joint final report after the examination has been completed, as described in the [examination reports and guidance on corrections section](#).

### **Impartiality and fairness**

- 20.7. The PGR student, their supervisors, the School PGR Director, and the examiners must avoid any action that might be seen to impair the examiners' ability to make a fair and impartial assessment of the student's work.
- 20.8. Examiners must not comment on drafts of the student's dissertation prior to the examination.
- 20.9. PGR Students and their supervisors must not contact examiners prior to the examination beyond discussing the practical arrangements for the oral examination with the internal examiner (or independent chair if there are no internal examiners). This discussion can include raising any reasonable adjustments or relevant exceptional circumstances.

### **Practical arrangements**

- 20.10. The internal examiner co-ordinates the practical arrangements for the oral examination. If there is no internal examiner, the independent chair will act as the co-ordinator. If there is more than one internal examiner, the School PGR Director must nominate one of them to act as the co-ordinator.
- 20.11. Where an independent chair is appointed because the internal examiner is inexperienced, the internal examiner still co-ordinates the oral examination with the independent chair providing any necessary guidance.
- 20.12. The co-ordinator must ensure that the PGR student is given at least ten days' notification of the date of the oral examination.

### **Reasonable adjustments and exceptional circumstances**

- 20.13. PGR Students with a disability can be offered reasonable adjustments to the oral examination. Students must contact [Disability Services](#) for advice.
- 20.14. If necessary, a Study Support Plan (SPP) from Disability Services will make recommendations for reasonable adjustments appropriate for the PGR student. The PGR student and their supervisors must ensure that the School PGR Director and the internal examiner (and/or independent chair if appointed) are aware of the Study Support Plan.

- 20.15. The examiners (and independent chair if appointed), under guidance from the School PGR Director and/or the Faculty PGR Director, must take any recommendations for reasonable adjustments specified in a Study Support Plan into account during the oral examination.
- 20.16. If there are exceptional circumstances not related to a disability that could affect a PGR student's performance at the oral examination, the student or their supervisors can raise this with the School PGR Director and the internal examiner (and/or the independent chair if appointed).
- 20.17. Where appropriate, the examiners (and independent chair if appointed), under guidance from the School PGR Director and/or the Faculty PGR Director, can take any exceptional circumstances into account during the oral examination.

### **Recording oral examinations and other special arrangements**

- 20.18. Oral examinations are not routinely recorded. The Faculty PGR Director can approve the recording of an oral examination where there is justification and with the agreement of the student and the examiners. Approval must be sought prior to the start of the oral examination.
- 20.19. The Faculty PGR Director can approve other special arrangements for the oral examination on the same basis.
- 20.20. Schools can seek agreement from the Faculty PGR Director for the regular use of recording or other special arrangements for oral examinations.

### **Location**

- 20.21. Oral examinations are usually held in person at the University of Bristol but can be held partly online or fully online. The examiners and the PGR student must agree how the oral examination will operate with the arrangements being approved by the School PGR Director and the Faculty PGR Director.
- 20.22. If the oral examination is partly or fully online, the [policy for online oral examinations](#) must be followed.
- 20.23. In exceptional circumstances, the Faculty PGR Director can approve a request for the oral examination to be held in person in a physical location outside of the University of Bristol. The examiners and PGR student must agree on the location.

### **Observers**

- 20.24. Observers can attend the oral examination if the examiners and PGR student agree to their presence and if this is approved by School PGR Director and the Faculty PGR Director. Observers can be a student's supervisor/s or other individuals.
- 20.25. Observers cannot contribute to the discussion during the oral examination.

20.26. Observers cannot see the examiners' preliminary reports and must withdraw before the examiners start to consider their recommendation. The only exception to this rule is where an observer is an inexperienced academic, who has no close links to the student, and who is attending specifically to gain knowledge of the full examination process.

### **Conduct of the examination**

20.27. Throughout the examination process, examiners (and independent chair if appointed) must treat the PGR student's work with strict confidence.

20.28. The examiners (and independent chair if appointed) must ensure that the examination is conducted fairly, and that the PGR student is given optimum opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of their project and of the wider research field through the dissertation and in the oral examination.

20.29. All examiners participate in the oral examination with an external examiner normally taking the lead in the discussion of the student's dissertation. An independent chair, if appointed, presides over the oral examination but only participates as needed to direct the examiners on the regulations and procedures for examination. The independent chair can also provide procedural guidance to the PGR student and can consider any wellbeing issues.

20.30. All participants in the oral examination must behave with respect, courtesy and with integrity towards those present. The oral examination must be conducted in an appropriate and professional manner.

20.31. The oral examination must be conducted in English unless the Faculty PGR Director has approved a request from a PGR student in Modern Languages, who has submitted a dissertation in another language, to hold the oral examination in that language. The examiners must agree to the oral examination being held in another language.

20.32. Examiners (and the independent chair if appointed) are responsible for ensuring that the oral examination is conducted fairly and with consideration of any reasonable adjustments or any special arrangements that have been put in place.

### **Academic misconduct and oral examination**

20.33. If examiners suspect academic misconduct (for example, the falsification of data) in the dissertation during their preparations for the oral examination, they must stop the examination process without holding an oral examination.

20.34. If during the oral examination the examiners start to suspect academic misconduct, they can ask the student questions on this matter. If concerns remain, the examiners must stop the oral examination.

20.35. If examiners suspect academic misconduct after the oral examination has concluded, they must stop the examination process at that point.

20.36. The internal examiner (or the independent chair if appointed) must inform the student that the examination process has been stopped because of a suspected academic

misconduct. The examiners must then follow the [policy on academic misconduct for PGR examinations and awards](#).

## 21. Examination reports and guidance on corrections

The regulations in this section cover the reports completed by examiners and independent chairs for examinations of a postgraduate research (PGR) students, including the guidance from examiners on corrections.

In this section:

- Examiners' preliminary reports
- Examiners' recommendation
- Recommendation options
- What constitutes minor errors
- Research master's awards and doctoral students
- Guidance from examiners on corrections and resubmissions
- Sharing guidance with students
- Joint final report
- Independent chair report
- Submitting examination reports

### Guidance related to these regulations

- [Guidance for PGR examiners](#)
- [Guidance on examination process for PGR students](#)
- [Guidance for staff on the PGR post-examination process](#)

Examiners' preliminary and joint final report templates are available to download on the [guidance for examiners webpage](#).

### Examiners' preliminary reports

21.1. Before the oral examination, examiners must:

- 21.1.1. Undertake an initial assessment of the student's work, including a consideration of the relevant [award criteria](#) and, if present, a [Covid-19 statement](#).
- 21.1.2. Complete individual preliminary reports in English summarising their initial assessment and noting areas to explore in the oral examination.
- 21.1.3. Exchange their preliminary reports with the other examiner/s.
- 21.1.4. Prepare for the oral examination with the other examiner/s and use the preliminary reports to formulate questions for the student.

21.2. If an independent chair is appointed, they must receive the preliminary reports and must oversee the examiners' preparations for the oral examination.

21.3. If at any point of the examination process, the examiners suspect academic misconduct (for example, the falsification of data), the internal examiner, or the independent chair if appointed, must stop the examination. The internal examiner or independent chair must inform the student that the examination process has been



stopped because of suspected academic misconduct. The examiners must then follow the [policy on academic misconduct for PGR examinations and awards](#).

### Examiners' recommendation

- 21.4. After the oral examination, the examiners must make a recommendation with a supporting rationale on a joint final report based on:
- 21.4.1. an assessment of the dissertation (or submission for a doctoral degree by published work), and
  - 21.4.2. on the student's performance in the oral examination.
- 21.5. If after exhausting all efforts to reach a joint recommendation, the examiners do not agree, they can make individual recommendations on separate final reports.
- 21.6. An independent chair, if appointed, must oversee the deliberations of the examiners in reaching their recommendation. In the case of disagreement between the examiners, the chair is confined to advising the examiners on their options and on enabling them to reach a decision.
- 21.7. Examiners must not discuss their recommendation with the supervisors during any part of the examination process.

### Recommendation options

- 21.8. Examiners must decide on a recommendation from the permitted options.

A	<b>Award unconditionally.</b> The student has met the criteria for the award of the relevant degree.
B	<b>Award with minor errors.</b> The student has met the criteria for the award of the relevant degree, but minor errors must be corrected. The student will be given 28 days from the formal notification of the outcome to submit their corrections.
C	<b>Require the correction of errors or omissions of substance.</b> The student has not met the criteria for the award of the relevant degree, as errors or omissions of substance must be corrected. The student will normally be given six months from the formal notification of the outcome to submit their corrections.
D	<b>Permit the student to resubmit in a revised form.</b> The student has not met the criteria for the award of the relevant degree, as the work requires significant revision and a resubmission. The student will normally be given twelve months from the formal notification of the outcome to resubmit.
E	<b>(Doctoral students only) Award the relevant research master's degree unconditionally.</b> The student has not met the criteria for the doctoral award and has no prospect of reaching doctoral standard in any permitted timeframe, but they have met the criteria for the relevant research master's degree.
F	<b>(Doctoral students only) Award the relevant research master's degree with minor errors.</b> The student has not met the criteria for the doctoral award and has no prospect of reaching doctoral standard in any permitted timeframe. They have

	<p>instead met the criteria for the relevant research master's degree, but minor errors must be corrected. The student will be given 28 days from the formal notification of the outcome to submit their corrections.</p>
G	<p><b>(Doctoral students only). Permit the student to resubmit in a revised form for the relevant research master's degree.</b> The student has not met the criteria for the doctoral award and has no prospect of reaching doctoral standard in any permitted timeframe. They do however have the potential to meet the criteria for the relevant research master's degree following a resubmission. The student will normally be given twelve months from the formal notification of the outcome to resubmit.</p>
H	<p><b>Fail</b> The student has not met the criteria for the award of the relevant degree and has no prospect of reaching the relevant standard in any permitted timeframe. For doctoral students, there is also no prospect of the student reaching the standard for a research master's degree.</p>

- 21.9. Resubmission is only permitted once. For second examinations, examiners cannot recommend a further resubmission (recommendations D and G).
- 21.10. For doctoral degrees by published work, examiners can make any recommendation. Where corrections or a resubmission is required, examiners can only specify changes to the commentary and not the publications. Examiners can also require the removal of individual publications.

### What constitutes minor errors

- 21.11. If the examiners recommend minor errors, this can only cover:
- 21.11.1. Typographical errors.
  - 21.11.2. Minor amendments, replacements and/or additions to the text, references, or diagrams.
  - 21.11.3. Other more extensive corrections if they do not require a major reworking or reinterpretation of the intellectual content of the dissertation.
- 21.12. If the required corrections are more substantial, the examiners cannot recommend minor errors.
- 21.13. If there are numerous instances of errors that are individually minor but when taken together form a significant undertaking, examiners can recommend errors or omissions of substance instead, as this provides a longer period.

### Research master's awards and doctoral students

- 21.14. Where a doctoral student has not met the criteria for a doctoral award, the examiners must not automatically recommend a research master's award as a default. A research master's award is only appropriate if the student has met the criteria for this award.

21.15. The relevant research master's degree for recommendations E, F and G for each faculty is as follows:

21.15.1. Master of Philosophy (MPhil) – for Arts and for Social Sciences and Law.

21.15.2. Master of Science by Research (MScR) – for Engineering, Health Sciences, Life Sciences, and Science.

### **Guidance from examiners on corrections and resubmissions**

21.16. If the examiners require corrections or a resubmission, they must produce written guidance for the student.

21.17. The combined guidance from examiners must:

21.17.1. Provide combined guidance from all examiners that specifies the parts of the work where improvement is required.

21.17.2. Avoid individual lists from each examiner as this can risk inconsistencies and duplication. Where there are typographical and other minor errors annotated on the dissertation, this can be from one examiner.

21.17.3. Avoid language that suggests the improvements are optional, such as 'the student might wish to consider'.

21.17.4. Provide sufficient detail so that the student is given appropriate direction, while allowing the student to use their initiative. Guidance on minor errors will necessarily be narrower in focus.

21.17.5. Define the limit of the changes required, which must be achievable within the time permitted for the recommended outcome.

21.17.6. Avoid directing the student to undertake further work beyond the requirements for the award. Publications, for example, do not form part of the award criteria and so cannot be required.

21.18. For typographical and other minor errors, this can be returned to the student as annotation on the dissertation. It is acknowledged that annotation on the dissertation will not necessarily be provided jointly from all examiners.

### **Sharing guidance with the student**

21.19. The internal examiner (or independent chair if there are only external examiners) must send the guidance on corrections or a resubmission directly to the student as soon as possible after the oral examination. The guidance, except for any annotation added to the dissertation, must also be included in the joint final report.

21.20. Students can work on their corrections or on a resubmission when they receive the examiners' guidance on the understanding that the Research Degrees Examination Board can require enhanced guidance from the examiners and/or can change the outcome of the examination.

### **Joint final report**

- 21.21. Examiners must make a recommendation, provide a supporting rationale, and include guidance on any required corrections or a resubmission on a joint final report, which must be written in English.
- 21.22. If the recommendation and rationale differ significantly from the preliminary reports, the examiners must explain why in the joint final report.
- 21.23. If the examiners do not agree on a recommendation, they can complete and submit separate final reports. Separate reports should only be used after all efforts to reach a joint recommendation have failed.
- 21.24. Examiners can also comment on the examination process in confidence directly to the Research Degrees Examination Board (via [pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk)) if they have any observations that cannot be included in their report.

### **Independent chair report**

- 21.25. The independent chair, if appointed, must complete a report to confirm that the examination was conducted in accordance with the regulations.

### **Submitting examination reports**

- 21.26. The internal examiner (or independent chair if there are only external examiners) must submit the examiners' preliminary reports, the joint final report, and the report from the independent chair (if appointed) to the School PGR Director.
- 21.27. The School PGR Director must review the reports, sign the joint final report, and arrange for the reports to be sent to the Academic Quality and Policy Office ([pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk)) within 14 days of the oral examination.
- 21.28. If the School PGR Director has a close link to the student (for example, if they are the student's supervisor, examiner, or independent chair), they must nominate another senior academic in the school to review the reports. The School PGR Director or the Head of School can also appoint a nominee if the School PGR Director will be unavailable for a period.
- 21.29. Once received by the Academic Quality and Policy Office, examination reports are usually considered at the next scheduled meeting of the [Research Degrees Examination Board](#).
- 21.30. Examination reports are confidential and must not be shared with the student or their supervisors until they have been considered by the Research Degrees Examination Board.

## 22. Research Degrees Examination Board

The regulations in this section cover the role of the Research Degrees Examination Board, where the authority to grant and withdraw awards sits, and the research degrees awarded at the University of Bristol.

In this section:

- The role of the exam board
- The authority to grant and withdraw awards
- Name on certificates issued by the University
- Summary of research degrees and higher doctorates

### Guidance related to these regulations

- [Guidance on examination process for PGR students](#)
- [Guidance for staff on the PGR post-examination process](#)

### The role of the exam board

- 22.1. The Research Degrees Examination Board decides on awards and other outcomes for research degree examinations. Examiners' recommendations are provisional until the Board has decided on the result.
- 22.2. The Board can accept, change, or reject the examiners' recommendation. It can also require examiners to revise joint final reports and for independent chairs to revise their reports if they are incorrectly completed or insufficiently detailed.
- 22.3. The Board can award degrees under the [policy on failure to complete assessment for research degrees](#).
- 22.4. The Board is responsible for the [policy on academic misconduct for PGR examinations and awards](#).
- 22.5. Discussions held by the Board are confidential.
- 22.6. The Board will communicate its decisions to students. The Board will also send the examiners' reports to students and their supervisors once a decision has been made. Communications are normally sent within two weeks of the Board meeting.
- 22.7. A student can appeal against a decision of the Research Degrees Examination Board as set out in the [assessment regulations](#).

### The authority to grant and withdraw academic awards

- 22.8. On the recommendation of the Research Degrees Examination Board, subject to the overriding authority of Senate and the Board of Trustees, the University will grant an academic award to any person who has fulfilled all conditions prescribed for their research degree in statutes, ordinances, and regulations.

- 22.9. On the recommendation of Senate, the Board of Trustees can award a degree of the University as an honorary degree. An honorary degree will not however be granted if the degree denotes that the holder as being fit to practice in a professional capacity.
- 22.10. On the recommendation of Senate, the Board of Trustees can withdraw an academic award, distinction, or prize of the University if it is subsequently discovered that the award, distinction, or prize was improperly obtained.
- 22.11. On the recommendation of Senate, the Board of Trustees can accept a request from any person to resign an academic award, distinction, or prize of the University.
- 22.12. On the recommendation of Senate, the Board of Trustees can restore an academic award, distinction, or prize of the University to a person who has been deprived of it or who has voluntarily resigned it.

### **Name on certificates issued by the University**

- 22.13. The University issues degree certificates in the student's legal name. No subsequent changes are permitted to the name shown on the certificate except where a graduate who has undergone gender reassignment legally changes their name.

### **Summary of research degrees and higher doctorates**

- 22.14. The University can award research degrees and higher doctorates as listed below.
- 22.15. From 1 August 2022, higher doctorates by published work are no longer open as an examined degree for new entrants. Higher doctorates continue to be awarded as honorary degrees.

Faculty of Arts	<u>Research degrees</u> Doctor of Philosophy denoted by PhD Master of Music denoted by MMus Master of Philosophy denoted by MPhil Master of Science by Research denoted by MScR  <u>Higher doctorates</u> Doctor of Music denoted by DMus Doctor of Letters denoted by DLitt
Faculty of Engineering	<u>Research degrees</u> Doctor of Philosophy denoted by PhD Engineering Doctorate denoted by EngD Master of Science by Research denoted by MScR  <u>Higher doctorates</u> Doctor of Engineering denoted by DEng
Faculty of Life Sciences	<u>Research degrees</u> Doctor of Philosophy denoted by PhD Doctor of Medicine denoted by MD Master of Science by Research denoted by MScR

	<u>Higher doctorates</u> Doctor of Science denoted by DSc
Faculty of Health Science	<u>Research degrees</u> Doctor of Philosophy denoted by PhD Doctor of Dental Surgery denoted by DDS Doctor of Medicine denoted by MD Master of Science by Research denoted by MScR  <u>Higher doctorates</u> Doctor of Science denoted by DSc
Faculty of Science	<u>Research degrees</u> Doctor of Philosophy denoted by PhD Master of Science by Research denoted by MScR  <u>Higher doctorates</u> Doctor of Science denoted by DSc
Faculty of Social Sciences and Law	<u>Research degrees</u> Doctor of Philosophy denoted by PhD Doctor of Education denoted by EdD Doctor of Educational Psychology denoted by DEdPsy Master of Philosophy denoted by MPhil Master of Science by Research denoted by MScR  <u>Higher doctorates</u> Doctor of Science denoted by DSc Doctor of Laws denoted by LL.D

## 23. Awards and other outcomes

The regulations in this section cover the awards and other outcomes approved by the Research Degrees Examination Board.

In this section:

- Awarded unconditionally
- Awarded with minor errors
- Errors or omissions of substance
- Resubmissions
- Fail

### Guidance related to these regulations

- [Guidance for PGR examiners](#)
- [Guidance on examination process for PGR students](#)
- [Guidance for staff on the PGR post-examination process](#)
- [Graduation frequently asked questions](#)

### Awarded unconditionally

23.1. An awarded PGR student is entitled to attend a graduation ceremony. The degree certificate is released after the graduation ceremony, but the certificate will be withheld until the student has deposited the definitive version of their dissertation with the Library for [public access](#).

### Awarded with minor errors

23.2. An awarded PGR student is entitled to attend a graduation ceremony. The degree certificate is released after the graduation ceremony, but the certificate will be withheld until the student has completed their corrections satisfactorily and they have subsequently deposited the definitive version of their dissertation with the Library for [public access](#).

23.3. The PGR student must email their corrected dissertation to the internal examiner (or independent chair if they only have external examiners) within 28 days following the formal notification of their award by the Research Degrees Examination Board. It is permissible for the student to email their corrected dissertation before they have been notified of the award.

23.4. The internal examiner must review the corrected dissertation and must email the student and the Academic Quality and Policy Office ([pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk)) to confirm when they are satisfied with the corrections.

23.5. The independent chair, an external examiner, or a University of Bristol academic nominated by the school must assess the corrections if there is no internal examiner. The independent chair must ensure that an email is sent to the student and the Academic Quality and Policy Office ([pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk)) to confirm when the corrections have been completed satisfactorily.



### **Errors or omissions of substance**

- 23.6. PGR students with errors or omissions of substance cannot be awarded until they have satisfactorily corrected their dissertation.
- 23.7. The original examiners (and the independent chair if appointed) will be retained to assess the revised dissertation unless the Research Degrees Examination Board decides that new examiners and/or a new independent chair are required.
- 23.8. If there are only external examiners, the role of the internal examiner in relation to errors or omissions of substance will be performed by the independent chair.

#### *Clarifications and support for corrections*

- 23.9. The PGR student can contact the internal examiner once to discuss the revisions required by the examiners. If the student only has external examiners, the student can request clarification from the independent chair, who is permitted to contact the examiners once for this purpose. The student must seek further clarification and guidance from their supervisors.
- 23.10. Supervisors must provide continued support to students who are required to correct errors or omissions of substance.

#### *Deadline for the revised dissertation*

- 23.11. The PGR student must email their revised dissertation to their internal examiner normally within six months after the formal notification of their outcome. The time permitted is the same for all students irrespective of whether they were previously full- or part-time.
- 23.12. The PGR student can in exceptional circumstances request an extension to the deadline from the Research Degrees Examination Board (via [pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk)). In considering the request, the Research Degrees Examination Board will take into account the [final completion limit](#) for the student.
- 23.13. A PGR student who does not email their revised dissertation to their internal examiner by their deadline will be deemed to have withdrawn because they will have run out of time. Revised dissertations that are submitted late will not be accepted.

#### *Examiners' assessment of the revised dissertation*

- 23.14. All examiners must review the corrected dissertation and assess whether the errors or omissions of substance listed in the joint final report have been addressed.
- 23.15. Examiners must only consider whether the errors or omissions of substance listed in the joint final report have been completed satisfactorily. Examiners must not raise new points at this stage unless the student has introduced a new problem in undertaking the corrections.

#### *Where examiners require further, minor modifications*

- 23.16. If the examiners are not satisfied with the revised dissertation, they can grant the student up to four additional weeks to make further, minor modifications to address

the required corrections. This additional period will start when the examiners have sent their further comments to the student.

- 23.17. The internal examiner must email the student with the examiners' further comments and the new deadline. The internal examiner must also inform the Academic Quality and Policy Office ([pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk)) of the additional time given.

#### *Examiners' recommendation for award*

- 23.18. The internal examiner must email the Research Degrees Examination Board (via [pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk)) to confirm that all examiners are satisfied with the revised dissertation.
- 23.19. The confirmation will usually be considered at the next scheduled meeting of the [Research Degrees Examination Board](#). When the Board ratifies the confirmation from the examiners, the student will be awarded.
- 23.20. An awarded PGR student is entitled to attend a graduation ceremony. The degree certificate is released after the graduation ceremony, but the certificate will be withheld until the student has deposited the definitive version of their dissertation with the Library for [public access](#).

#### **Resubmissions**

- 23.21. PGR students required to resubmit cannot be awarded until they have successfully completed a second examination.
- 23.22. The original examiners (and the independent chair if appointed) will be retained to examine the resubmission unless the Research Degrees Examination Board decides that new examiners and/or a new independent chair are required.
- 23.23. The external examiner will be paid a fee for the second examination.

#### *Clarifications and support for a resubmission*

- 23.24. The PGR student can contact the internal examiner once to discuss the revisions required by the examiners. If the student only has external examiners, the student can request clarification from the independent chair, who is permitted to contact the examiners once for this purpose. The student must seek further clarification and guidance from their supervisors.
- 23.25. Supervisors must provide continued support to students who are required to resubmit.

#### *Resubmitting the revised dissertation*

- 23.26. The PGR student must resubmit their revised dissertation normally within twelve months of the notification of the outcome from the Research Degrees Examination Board. The time permitted is the same for all students irrespective of whether they were previously registered on a full- or part-time basis.

- 23.27. The PGR student can in exceptional circumstances request an extension to the set deadline by emailing the Research Degrees Examination Board (via [pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk)). In considering the request, the Research Degrees Examination Board will take into account the [final completion limit](#) for the student.
- 23.28. The PGR student must resubmit by email on or before their deadline to the Academic Quality and Policy Office ([pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk)) and by uploading to Turnitin so that a new plagiarism review can be undertaken. The student must also pay a resubmission fee when they resubmit.
- 23.29. A PGR student who does not resubmit their revised dissertation by their deadline will be deemed to have withdrawn because they will have run out of time. Dissertations that are resubmitted late will not be accepted for examination.

#### *Circulation to examiners*

- 23.30. PGR Students and their supervisors must not send the resubmitted dissertation to examiners. Only the Academic Quality and Policy Office can circulate the dissertation or give consent for its circulation by another route.
- 23.31. The Academic Quality and Policy Office will circulate the resubmitted dissertation to approved examiners if the dissertation was submitted on time, if the resubmission fee has been paid and if the plagiarism review has been successfully completed.
- 23.32. An independent chair, if appointed, is not expected to read the resubmitted dissertation in preparation for the second examination, but they can request an electronic copy from the Academic Quality and Policy Office if this will assist them in undertaking their role.

#### *The second examination*

- 23.33. The examiners must conduct a second examination, including completing new preliminary reports and a new joint final report. If an independent chair has been appointed, they must also complete a new independent chair report.
- 23.34. Examiners must only consider whether the required revisions listed in the joint final report have been addressed satisfactorily. Examiners must not raise new points at this stage unless the student has introduced a new problem in undertaking the revisions.
- 23.35. The second examination will usually include a new oral examination.
- 23.36. When the examiners have read the resubmitted dissertation, they can waive the need for a new oral examination if they agree that no purpose will be served by holding an oral examination and the revised work meets the criteria for award (either unconditionally or with minor errors). Where the examiners have waived the oral examination, they must provide an explanation in the joint final report.
- 23.37. The examiners can make any of the permitted recommendation options relevant for the degree being examined on the joint final report. As resubmission is only allowed once, the examiners cannot recommend a further resubmission.

23.38. Examination reports for a resubmission must be submitted to the Research Degrees Examination Board through the standard examination report route, as set out in the [examination reports and guidance on corrections section](#).

**Fail**

23.39. If the Research Degrees Examination Board has decided that a PGR student has failed, the student will not receive a research degree award and is not permitted to resubmit.

## 24. Public access to dissertations

The regulations in this section cover public access to research degree dissertations at the University of Bristol, including how to defer public access and to redact material.

In this section:

- Requirement to deposit dissertations with the Library
- Deadline and process for depositing
- Definitions of a deferral and redactions
- Requesting a deferral or redactions
- Approval of deferral and redaction requests
- Depositing if there is a deferral or redactions
- Redacted version
- Extension requests

### Guidance related to these regulations

- [Guidance on deferral and redaction requests](#)
- [Deferral guidance from the Library](#)

The request forms for deferrals and redactions are available to download on the [guidance on deferral and redaction requests](#) webpage.

### Requirement to deposit dissertations with the Library

24.1. Awarded PGR students must deposit the definitive version of their dissertation with the University of Bristol Library. Dissertations will be publicly available unless a deferral or redaction request has been approved.

24.2. Degree certificates are released after a graduation ceremony, but the certificate will be withheld if the student has not deposited the definitive version of their dissertation with the Library.

24.3. The definitive version of the dissertation deposited with the Library must be identical to the version approved by the student's examiners, except for any materials that breach a third party's copyright or privacy. The student must remove any materials that breach third-party copyright or privacy from the dissertation before it is released publicly. Removal of this type of material does not require the student to request a redaction.

24.4. Deposited dissertations will only be made public with the approval of the Academic Quality and Policy Office and the Library, and after any approved deferral or redaction period has ended.

### **Deadline and process for depositing**

- 24.5. Awarded PGR students who do not have outstanding minor errors must deposit their dissertation within 28 calendar days of their award notification.
- 24.6. Awarded PGR students with outstanding minor errors must deposit their dissertation within 28 calendar days of receiving confirmation from the internal examiner that their corrections are satisfactory. The independent chair, an external examiner, or a University of Bristol academic nominated by the school provides this confirmation if there is no internal examiner.
- 24.7. Students must deposit their dissertation in [Pure](#) in pdf format or in another format acceptable to the University and appropriate for the work. As part of the deposit process, students must complete a depositor declaration.
- 24.8. The only exception to depositing in Pure is where a request to deposit on a secure University server has been approved due to contractual, security or safety obligations.

### **Definitions of a deferral and redactions**

- 24.9. A deferral means that the entire dissertation is held back from public release for an approved period. Deferral requests can, for example, cover where a prospective publisher requires the work to be held back or where there is sensitive information related to contractual, security or safety obligations.
- 24.10. Redactions mean that specific parts of the dissertation are held back for an approved period with the unredacted parts being made publicly available. Redactions are normally only required if there are contractual, security or safety obligations that make this necessary.
- 24.11. Redactions only relate to the definitive version of the dissertation following the student's award. Redactions cannot be applied to the version submitted for examination.

### **Requesting a deferral or redactions**

- 24.12. A PGR student can request that their dissertation is deferred from public release or that material is redacted. Requests must be submitted no later than the student's deadline to deposit the definitive version of their dissertation with the Library, but ideally much sooner.
- 24.13. In exceptional circumstances, where a need for a deferral or for redactions emerges after the dissertation has been deposited, a PGR student can make a later deferral or redaction request.
- 24.14. A PGR student's main supervisor can make a deferral or redaction request on behalf of the student if there are contractual, security or safety obligations that require the supervisor's direction.
- 24.15. A PGR student or, where relevant, their main supervisor must provide the following information on the relevant form when making a request:

- 24.15.1. A reason for the deferral or redactions, including any relevant evidence.
- 24.15.2. A proposed period for the deferral or redactions based on the specific circumstances.
- 24.15.3. Where relevant, details of any contractual, security or safety obligations (including those that relate to UK export control considerations).
- 24.15.4. Where deposit on a secure University server (rather than on Pure) is requested, a statement on why this is needed. This can only be requested if there are contractual, security or safety obligations that make it necessary.
- 24.15.5. Where redactions are requested, details of how the student, the supervisors and, where relevant, the funder or sponsor will manage the redaction process.

### **Approval of deferral and redaction requests**

- 24.16. The Faculty PGR Director approves deferral and redaction requests of up to 12 months after which the full version of the dissertation will be publicly available.
- 24.17. The Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (PGR) considers requests that exceed a 12-month period. A recommendation from the Faculty PGR Director and any funder and/or sponsor conditions will be considered as part of the decision process.

### **Depositing if there is a deferral or redactions**

- 24.18. PGR students must deposit the definitive version by their deadline even if a deferral or redactions have been approved. It is only the public release of the dissertation that can be deferred or can be partially released with redactions. The requirement to deposit itself cannot be deferred.
- 24.19. Approved deferrals and redactions only relate to the content of the dissertation. The PGR student must enter their metadata (student name, dissertation title and abstract) in Pure and this will be publicly available even where approved deferrals or redactions are in place. If there is any sensitive material in the abstract, the student must amend the abstract entered in Pure to remove the sensitive material.
- 24.20. Where a request to deposit the dissertation on a secure University server (rather than on Pure) has been approved, the PGR student will be required to deposit directly to the Library.

### **Redacted version**

- 24.21. If redactions have been approved, both the redacted and full versions of the dissertation must be deposited by the PGR student's deadline. The redacted version must include a cover sheet inserted before the title page.
- 24.22. The PGR student must use the following template for the cover sheet, which they can adapt for their individual circumstances.

This is a redacted version of the full dissertation, as agreed by the student, the supervisors and [name], the sponsor of this [degree type] studentship in the Faculty of [name]. The redactions cover key information that was deemed too sensitive to be published. The redactions have been kept to the minimum level necessary, so that the dissertation still shows the research excellence of the author.

- 24.23. The PGR student must deposit both the redacted and full versions of the dissertation to the Library. The redacted version file must be named as follows:  
'Redacted\_Final\_Copy\_[year\_month\_day]\_[student surname\_student initials]\_[Degree type].'

#### **Extension requests for deferrals and redactions**

- 24.24. The PGR student, the main supervisor or, if relevant, a sponsor or funder can request an extension to a deferral or redaction period on the relevant form. If necessary, the request can also include changing from a deferral to a redaction, or vice versa.
- 24.25. An extension request should be submitted in good time (normally three months) before the existing deferral or redaction period ends.
- 24.26. The Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (PGR) approves extension requests for deferrals and redactions.



## Policy on integrating publications as chapters in a PGR dissertation

This policy sets out how PGR students can integrate their publications as chapters within their dissertation.

The policy covers:

- Principles
- Format of the dissertation
- Length
- Examination
- Copyright

### Principles

1. PGR students are strongly encouraged to publish their work, including prior to submission and examination. In some disciplines, it is accepted practice to include publications as chapters within the dissertation, while maintaining the dissertation as a coherent, single document. Students should discuss with their supervisors whether the inclusion of publications as chapters would be appropriate.
2. This policy relates to the inclusion of complete publications as individual chapters (i.e. one publication per chapter) within a dissertation. For example, these publications could be journal articles, conference proceedings or official reports, and may be already published, accepted for publication, submitted for publication, or in a format suitable for publication.
3. A substantial amount of the researched materials in the publications must derive from original research undertaken by the student during their period of study. The integration of publications as chapters is not the same as a doctoral degree by published work, which relies on publications completed prior to registration.
4. The student can be the sole or co-author of the publications. If any of the publications have been co-authored, there must be clarity on the contribution of the student, which must be substantial. The student's contribution to any co-authored publication must be clearly stated.
5. Faculties and schools may have discipline-specific advice in place to complement this policy.

### Format of the dissertation

6. All dissertations must conform to the format required in the [dissertation content and format regulations](#). Where there are publications included as chapters (referred to as 'publication chapters'), the rules set out in this policy also apply.
7. The dissertation must be thematically coherent and structured so that it can be read as an integrated document, including a separate introduction, a full literature review,

an extended discussion that provides clarity on how the chapters are integrated as a complete text, and a separate conclusion.

8. Throughout the dissertation, there must be consistent formatting with uninterrupted pagination, and a single, unified reference list.
9. The dissertation cannot just be a series of reprints of publications.
10. The dissertation can contain a mixture of publication chapters and conventional chapters, with the category of each chapter clearly identified and, for publication chapters, referenced.
11. Where there are multi-authored publications included in the dissertation, the student must acknowledge the role and contribution of the co-authors. This can be achieved, for example, through a short statement at the beginning of the relevant chapter.
12. All dissertations submitted for examination are subject to a plagiarism check normally through Turnitin. This check must include any integrated publication chapters because they form part of the dissertation. Appropriately acknowledged and referenced publication chapters will pass the check.

### **Length**

13. The integration of publication chapters within the dissertation is likely to lead to some duplication as each publication will have self-contained components that might overlap with other chapters. As a result, the overall word count can exceed the standard word limit for the degree, but this should be discussed with supervisors and should only be used to address where there is duplication.

### **Examination**

14. The examination of dissertations with publication chapters must follow the standard [PGR assessment regulations](#). The dissertation must be coherent, consistent, and comprehensive so that it demonstrates the student's contribution clearly to the examiners. This policy does not set a requirement on the examiners to accept publication chapters, and they can decide that it is inappropriate and make a recommendation on that basis.
15. The inclusion of publication chapters does not of itself verify the quality or significance of the work in meeting the criteria for the award of a research degree. The outcome of the examination will be decided by the Research Degrees Examination Board in response to the recommendation of the examiners.

## Copyright

16. Authors should respect the terms of their publishing agreement. It is rare for publishers to prevent the incorporation of published material within a dissertation for examination purposes, but it might be necessary to redact any publisher-owned material from the final version of the dissertation before it is uploaded to Pure and made publicly available by the Library.

## Policy on PGR dissertations and the impact of Covid-19 restrictions

This policy sets out how PGR students can include a statement on the impact of Covid-19 restrictions in their dissertation.

The policy covers:

- Principles
- The decision to include a Covid-19 statement
- Covid-19 statement format
- Guidance for examiners on Covid-19 statements

### Principles

1. Where possible, PGR students should adapt their research activities to address disruptions caused by Covid-19 restrictions, but it might be necessary to include a statement in their dissertation on the impact of disruptions on their work. Examiners will consider this statement in relation to the scope and volume of the PGR student's work, but they will always uphold the [award criteria regulations](#). The threshold for the award remains unchanged and there can be no compromise in the integrity of the examination or the award.
2. This policy covers all PGR students who were registered during any period where Covid-19 restrictions were in place.
3. Adjustments to research projects are a common part of study, but the pandemic has in many cases created significant ongoing changed circumstances. PGR students will reflect on the impact of the pandemic on the design and conduct of their research, including through discussions that form part of the annual progress review process. Any redesigns to the project will form part of the narrative of the work and should be included in the research design section of the dissertation.
4. Suspensions and/or extensions might be appropriate ways of mitigating the impact of the pandemic but will not always be sufficient on their own. Even where redesigned research activities are discussed in the dissertation and/or where suspensions or extensions have been granted, PGR students might wish to provide a statement to their examiners on how the impact of Covid-19 restrictions has changed their project.
5. The focus of this policy is on assessment and the inclusion of a statement in a dissertation submitted or resubmitted for examination. Faculties and schools might have discipline-specific advice for students that complements this policy.

### The decision to include a Covid-19 statement

6. Any PGR student who has had their research activities curtailed by Covid-19 restrictions can include a Covid-19 statement in their dissertation. A statement is not compulsory and should only be included where a PGR student wishes to highlight the impact of the pandemic and the steps taken to adjust their research activities.

7. PGR students should discuss the inclusion of a Covid-19 statement in their dissertation with their supervisors, but the decision to include the statement rests with the student.

### **Covid-19 statement format**

8. The Covid-19 statement must be included in the dissertation between the abstract and the author's declaration – see the [dissertation content and format regulations](#). The statement is only required for the examination copy and should be removed when the final copy is deposited with the Library.
9. The statement, which must not exceed 800 words, will form a summary of any planned research activities disrupted by Covid-19 restrictions and the extent to which the student was able to adapt their work in those changed circumstances. The following can be included in the statement:
  - a. Details of any planned research activities curtailed by the pandemic because of, for example, lack of access to facilities, libraries, archives, research participants, fieldwork, etc. Information on any curtailed training should be included only insofar as it relates to the impact on research activities and on the dissertation.
  - b. An acknowledgement of the anticipated contribution and value to the dissertation if those research activities had not been curtailed and what was possible to include in the dissertation in the circumstances, including where alternative choices were made to adapt the work and whether there are any weaknesses that could not be overcome.
  - c. Any other relevant factors on the impact of Covid-19 on research activities and on the contents of the dissertation.
  - d. Details of any research activities required by the examiners as part of a resubmission that were curtailed by the pandemic can be included in a new or revised Covid-19 statement in the resubmitted dissertation.
10. Issues arising from illness, disability, bereavement, or any exceptional circumstances not related to disruptions to research activities caused by the pandemic must not be included, as there are other mechanisms to address those issues.

### **Guidance for examiners on Covid-19 statements**

11. Examiners must maintain academic standards and uphold the [award criteria regulations](#). Where a Covid-19 statement is included in a dissertation there can be some flexibility in the consideration of the scope and volume of the work produced, but not on its quality or on the thresholds for the award.
12. As set out in the [award criteria regulations](#), the dissertation must embody the results of research carried out by the student '*with the work produced being reasonably*

*expected from a capable and diligent student in the period of study specified in regulation.* The examiners' consideration of the scope and volume of the work produced in the dissertation can take into account where curtailed research activities have reduced what was possible in the period allowed. The dissertation must however still satisfy the standards required for the award.

13. Examiners must discount any information in a Covid-19 statement that does not relate to disruptions to research activities caused by the pandemic and to the content of the dissertation.
14. The recommendation from examiners is a matter of academic judgement and therefore it is their decision on what allowance to give to any limitations in the volume and scope of the dissertation due to the impact of Covid-19. Examiners must consider closely the result of pandemic-related disruptions in the production of the dissertation and decide whether in their academic judgement the dissertation meets the criteria for the award of the research degree.
15. The examiners' joint final report must incorporate an overview of their consideration of a Covid-19 statement and their determination of the impact on the scope and volume of the dissertation within the context of maintaining the academic standards required for the award.
16. Any corrections, or a resubmission, required by the examiners must take into account any allowance made by them on the limitations in volume and scope of the dissertation due to the pandemic. Examiners must consider what corrections are necessary to meet the criteria for the award and must not require additional work aimed only at addressing where research activities have been curtailed by

## Policy on academic misconduct in PGR examinations and awards

This policy defines the procedures for the investigation of suspected academic misconduct in PGR examinations and awards. It sets out how investigations are conducted, what the potential penalties are, and how the University decides on an outcome, including the role of the Research Degrees Examination Board (RDEB).

The policy covers:

- Reasons for investigation
- Investigations related to a plagiarism review
- Minor referencing problems
- Investigations related to issues raised by examiners
- Faculty panel membership
- The panel's investigation
- The panel's decision
- Referral to RDEB
- The role of RDEB
- An academic penalty is sufficient
- An academic penalty is insufficient
- Investigations related to allegations raised after a research degree has been awarded

1. The regulations on [academic integrity and research degrees](#) and the University-wide [academic integrity policy](#) contain the relevant underpinning rules on plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct.
2. Any suspected academic misconduct in relation to a credit-bearing taught component undertaken by a PGR student is not covered by this policy. The University's [Assessment Regulations](#) cover the regulations and procedures for academic misconduct in credit-bearing taught components.
3. Where the Faculty PGR Director or the Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (PGR) has a conflict of interest (for example, if they are a supervisor for the student), they must appoint a nominee to cover their role in this policy.

### Reasons for investigation

4. An investigation under this policy can be triggered in the following circumstances:
  - a. Suspected academic misconduct in the form of plagiarism and/or minor referencing problems is raised by the nominated reviewer as a result of the plagiarism review for a PGR student's submission for examination.
  - b. Suspected academic misconduct is raised by the examiners during the examination process.
  - c. Suspected academic misconduct is raised after an award had been approved.

### **Investigations related to a plagiarism review**

5. Regulations on plagiarism reviews are set out in the [academic integrity and research degrees section](#).
6. If the nominated reviewer of a plagiarism review finds suspected plagiarism and/or minor referencing problems in a dissertation, they must inform the Head of School and refer the case to the Faculty PGR Director with the relevant evidence as soon as possible.
7. The nominated reviewer must also inform the following people that the case has been referred to the Faculty PGR Director:
  - a. The PGR student.
  - b. The main supervisor.
  - c. The relevant school PGR professional services team (in the Faculty of Arts this will be the faculty PGR professional services team).
  - d. The Academic Quality and Policy Office ([pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk)).
8. The nominated reviewer must not provide details of the suspected issues when they notify the student and the main supervisor, as an investigation must be held before any details are confirmed.
9. The Faculty PGR Director must consider the evidence provided by the nominated reviewer and decide on one of the following outcomes:
  - a. Where there are only minor referencing problems, refer the case to the Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (PGR) for a decision.
  - b. Where there is suspected plagiarism, convene a faculty panel to investigate.

### **Minor referencing problems**

10. If the Faculty PGR Director considers that there are only minor referencing problems, they can refer the case to the Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (PGR) for a decision.
11. Minor referencing problems are where the PGR student has not fully adopted accepted academic practice in their referencing but where this is only limited in nature. Examples of minor referencing problems are:
  - a. The dissertation contains a small number of simple mistakes in referencing or citation.
  - b. The dissertation does not fully acknowledge the inclusion of the student's own previous publications or work they have co-authored with others.
12. When a student is referred to them, the Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (PGR) must consider the evidence provided by the Faculty PGR Director and decide on one of the following outcomes:



- a. If it is clear that there are only minor referencing problems, permit the PGR student to revise and re-present their dissertation.
  - b. If there appear to be more significant issues, refer the case back to the Faculty PGR Director to set up a faculty panel to investigate.
13. Where the decision is for minor referencing problems, the Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (PGR) must set a deadline for the PGR student to revise and re-present their dissertation. The deadline can be up to four weeks from the notification of the decision to the student. In exceptional circumstances, the Associate Pro-Vice Chancellor (PGR) can decide on a longer period and can grant extensions to the deadline.
14. The Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (PGR) must inform the Faculty PGR Director of the decision for minor referencing problems and of the deadline for the PGR student.
15. The Faculty PGR Director must inform the following people of the decision for minor referencing problems, the deadline, and the required revisions:
  - a. The PGR student.
  - b. The main supervisor.
  - c. The Head of School.
  - d. The relevant school PGR professional services team (in the Faculty of Arts this will be the faculty PGR professional services team).
  - e. The Academic Quality and Policy Office ([pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk)).
16. The PGR student must submit their revised dissertation by the deadline following the standard submission process of emailing a copy to the Academic Quality and Policy Office ([pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk)) and uploading a copy to Turnitin.
17. Supervisors must provide the PGR student with support in revising and re-presenting the dissertation so that the minor referencing problems are addressed.

#### **Investigations related to issues raised by examiners**

18. If the examiners of a PGR student suspect academic misconduct (for example, the falsification of data) during the examination process, the internal examiner, or the independent chair if appointed, must stop the examination.
19. The examiners must produce a report setting out the details of the suspected academic misconduct. The internal examiner, or independent chair if appointed, must submit this report to the Academic Quality and Policy Office ([pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk)). The report is confidential and must not be shared with the student before an investigation is held.

20. The Academic Quality and Policy Office must inform the Head of School and the School PGR Director and refer the case to the Faculty PGR Director with the relevant evidence.
21. The Academic Quality and Policy Office must inform the following people that the case has been referred to the Faculty PGR Director:
  - a. The PGR student.
  - b. The main supervisor.
  - c. The relevant school PGR professional services team (in the Faculty of Arts this will be the faculty PGR professional services team).
22. The Academic Quality and Policy Office must not provide details of the report from the examiners when they notify the student and the main supervisor, as an investigation must be held before any details are confirmed.
23. The Faculty PGR Director must convene a faculty panel to investigate.
24. Continuation of the examination process, including a rescheduled oral examination where necessary, will depend on the outcome of the investigation.

#### **Faculty panel membership**

25. The Faculty PGR Director must convene a faculty panel to investigate suspected academic misconduct when this is identified as a result of the plagiarism review or is identified by the examiners.
26. The Faculty PGR Director must ensure that the student and the main supervisor are notified of the decision to convene a panel.
27. The Faculty PGR Director must appoint the members of the panel, which must consist of at least three academic members of staff, including:
  - a. A chair, who must have appropriate experience for the role.
  - b. A member from the PGR student's home school.
  - c. A member from another school.
28. The Faculty Head of Student Administration (or nominee) must attend meetings of the panel including the interview with the student to provide advice on regulations and to take a formal note of proceedings.
29. The Faculty PGR Director cannot chair or be a member of the panel, as they must remain impartial during this stage.

#### **The panel's investigation**

30. The panel must investigate the suspected academic misconduct. The investigation will normally include an interview with the PGR student.

31. If the PGR student declines to attend the interview, the panel must conduct the investigation with the available evidence. Any obstruction or lack of engagement from the student must be documented in the panel's report.
32. The purpose of the interview with the PGR student is to determine whether academic misconduct has occurred and to allow the student to make representations and to present any mitigating factors.
33. All information and evidence considered by the panel must be made available to the PGR student in advance of the interview.
34. An adviser, friend, or other representative (such as the [Academic Advice service](#)) can accompany the student to the interview. The adviser, friend or representative can confer with the student, but they cannot ask or answer questions on behalf of the student during the interview.
35. The interview does not need to be recorded, but the panel chair can agree for a recording to be made in exceptional circumstances.
36. The chair must approve the formal note of the interview and must ensure that all participants, including the student, receive a copy. The student must not however receive a copy of the panel's full report at this stage.

#### **The panel's decision**

37. Following the investigation, the panel must decide whether the PGR student has committed academic misconduct.
38. If the panel decides that academic misconduct has not been proved, no further action under this policy will be taken and the examination process will resume. The panel chair must inform the following people of the decision:
  - a. The PGR student.
  - b. The main supervisor.
  - c. The Faculty PGR Director.
  - d. The Head of School.
  - e. The School PGR Director.
  - f. The relevant school PGR professional services team (in the Faculty of Arts this will be the faculty PGR professional services team).
  - g. The Academic Quality and Policy Office ([pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk)).
39. If the panel decides that academic misconduct has been committed, the panel must determine the seriousness of the offence. This must take into account whether this is a first or subsequent offence and the extent and significance of the academic misconduct.

40. Based on the seriousness of the offence, the panel can recommend one of the following academic penalties to RDEB:
- a. Impose no penalty beyond reporting the outcome to the Head of School and the main supervisor for future reference or for a specified period.
  - b. Require the student to re-present a revised version of their dissertation with the identified problems addressed.
  - c. Exclude the student from the award of the degree. This can be either permanently or for a stated period and can be either absolute or subject to the student complying with stipulated requirements.
  - d. Award the student a lower degree where regulations permit this.
41. For serious cases of academic misconduct, the panel can recommend that a non-academic penalty is considered as well.
42. The panel must submit a report, which will include their recommendation/s, to RDEB.

#### **Referral to RDEB**

43. The report from the panel to RDEB must include the following:
- a. A summary of the evidence considered.
  - b. The formal note of the interview or details on why the student declined an interview.
  - c. A note of the deliberations of the panel, including the factors taken into account in reaching a decision and any mitigations provided by the student.
  - d. The recommendation/s.
44. The panel chair must inform the student and the main supervisor of the recommendation/s, but the panel's full report remains confidential at this stage.

#### **The role of RDEB**

45. RDEB must consider the panel's report and recommendation/s. It can approve the panel's recommendation/s or decide on a different outcome, depending on the seriousness of the academic misconduct and on any mitigations reported by the panel.
46. RDEB has the authority to impose any of the following academic penalties:
- a. Impose no penalty beyond reporting the outcome to the Head of School and the main supervisor for future reference or for a specified period.
  - b. Require the student to re-present a revised version of their dissertation with the identified problems addressed.

- c. Exclude the student from the award of the degree. This can be either permanently or for a stated period and can be either absolute or subject to the student complying with stipulated requirements.
  - d. Award the student a lower degree where regulations permit this.
47. Academic misconduct in a dissertation submitted for a research degree should be mentioned in student references, unless any time limit set by RDEB under paragraph 46a has expired.
48. RDEB must record its conclusion and details of the imposed penalty in its minutes.
49. RDEB must keep a record of academic misconduct cases it has considered and note them in its annual report to the University Academic Quality and Standards Committee.

#### **An academic penalty is sufficient**

50. Where RDEB decides that an academic penalty is sufficient, it must inform the student and the main supervisor and provide them with a copy of the panel's full report.
51. RDEB must also inform the following people of the decision:
- a. The Head of School.
  - b. The panel chair.
  - c. The Faculty Head of Student Administration.
52. If the academic penalty imposed is for the student to re-present a revised version of their dissertation, RDEB must set a deadline for the student, usually not more than four weeks from the date of notification. In exceptional circumstances, RDEB can decide on a longer period and the RDEB chair (or nominee) can grant extensions to the deadline.
53. The PGR student must submit their revised dissertation by the deadline following the standard submission process of emailing a copy to the Academic Quality and Policy Office ([pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:pgr-exams@bristol.ac.uk)) and uploading a copy to Turnitin.
54. Supervisors must provide the PGR student with support in revising and re-presenting the dissertation.

#### **An academic penalty is insufficient**

55. Where RDEB decides that an academic penalty is insufficient because of the serious nature of the academic misconduct, it can refer the case to the Vice-Chancellor (via the University Secretary) to be dealt with under the [Student Disciplinary Regulations](#).
56. RDEB will not impose any penalty itself but can recommend to the Vice-Chancellor that a specified academic penalty is imposed alongside any non-academic penalty made under the Student Disciplinary Regulations.

57. Where a case is dealt with under the Student Disciplinary Regulations, the Vice-Chancellor (or nominee) will make the final decision on penalties and can impose any penalty or penalties available under the Student Disciplinary Regulations, as well as any specified academic penalty recommended by RDEB.

**Investigations related to allegations raised after a research degree has been awarded**

58. If an allegation of academic misconduct is made about an individual who has been awarded a research degree, RDEB must initiate an investigation.
59. RDEB will determine how the investigation will be conducted in a reasonable and appropriate way with the aim of ensuring a fair process.
60. Once the investigation has been completed, RDEB will report the findings to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students), who can consult with the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise), before reaching a decision on the case.
61. If the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students) decides that the research degree has been improperly awarded, they will refer the case to Senate for consideration of whether to recommend to the Board of Trustees that the award is withdrawn.

## Policy for online oral examinations

This policy sets out how online oral examinations for PGR students must be organised.

The policy covers:

- Principles
- Practical considerations

### Principles

1. A partly or fully online oral examination by video link can be held if the PGR student and the examiners agree to this approach and with School PGR Director and the Faculty PGR Director approval (see the [oral examination regulations](#)).
2. The PGR student and/or any or all examiners can participate remotely in an oral examination.
3. No pressure must be put on any individual to agree to the oral examination being conducted partly or fully online.
4. All reasonable steps must be taken to ensure that the PGR student is not disadvantaged compared with an in-person oral examination. The School PGR Director and the Faculty PGR Director must be confident that the PGR student is content with an online oral examination before they approve the request.
5. The Faculty PGR Director can appoint an experienced academic as an independent chair if they decide that this would assist in ensuring the examination is fair and conducted in accordance with the University's regulations. An independent chair is not however required for all online oral examinations.
6. If the PGR student is a remote participant, the Faculty PGR Director can require that an approved independent person, such as a member of academic staff from another academic institution, is present with the PGR student for the oral examination. This is not however required for all online oral examinations.

### Practical considerations

7. The internal examiner or, where there are only external examiners, the independent chair is responsible for arranging an online oral examination.
8. The video conferencing platform used for online oral examinations must be supported and licenced by the University of Bristol. IT Services provide [guidance on appropriate platforms](#).
9. The technology used must accommodate the anticipated needs of the examination.

10. The quality of the equipment to be used and the quality of the internet connection (particularly for the remote participant/s) must be taken into account when agreeing and arranging an online oral examination.
11. Any equipment required for the online oral examination must be available for sufficient time for the examination to take place. If there is doubt about the length of time required, every effort should be made to ensure that possible overrunning can be accommodated.
12. Time should be allowed in advance of the examination for all participants to undertake a short familiarisation session in the use of the technology, if this is needed.
13. A trial run should be undertaken prior to the oral examination to ensure that the technology and the internet connection meet requirements.
14. If the examiners are at different sites, they must take account of their need to share their preliminary reports and consult privately with each other before and after the oral examination.
15. Any materials brought by the PGR student into the room during an online oral examination should be identified at the start of the examination.
16. Online oral examinations will not be routinely recorded.



## Policy on failure to complete assessment for research degrees

This policy sets out how the Research Degrees Examination Board can award a research degree when the student has not completed the standard examination process because of their death, illness, or other substantial cause.

The policy covers:

- Principles
- Aegrotat research degree awards
- Standard research degree awards
- Students in the examination process

### Principles

1. The Research Degrees Examination Board can award a research degree outside of the standard examination process where the following conditions are met:
  - a. The PGR student is prevented in the event of their death, severe illness, or other debilitating condition from completing their dissertation and/or examination.
  - b. The research degree award cannot be made under the University's normal assessment regulations.
  - c. There is no prospect in the foreseeable future of the PGR student being able to fulfil the requirements of the award.
  - d. There is sufficient evidence of the PGR student's ability at the appropriate level for the award.
2. Where the student is on a programme of study that includes a professional component, an alternative research degree award might be appropriate.

### Aegrotat research degree awards

3. Aegrotat awards can be considered for PGR students who are unable to complete their programme of study and who have produced insufficient material for assessment because of their death, severe illness, or other debilitating condition. These students do not qualify for a standard award, but an aegrotat award can be granted if in the judgement of the Research Degrees Examination Board the candidate would have gained an award if circumstances had permitted.
4. The Research Degrees Examination Board can award an aegrotat research degree (at either doctoral or research master's level) if the following conditions are met:
  - a. The PGR student has been prevented in the event of their death, severe illness, or other debilitating condition from completing their programme of study and from producing sufficient material for assessment.
  - b. The PGR student is unable to complete an examination at a later date, including if this is deemed to be undesirable or impracticable by the Research Degrees Examination Board.

- c. The PGR student has demonstrated that they are worthy of an aegrotat award as confirmed through a supporting statement from their supervisors or from the School PGR Director.
- d. The PGR student (or in the case of posthumous awards, their next of kin) agrees to an aegrotat award.

### **Standard research degree awards**

- 5. Standard research degree awards can be considered for PGR students who are unable to complete their programme of study in the event of their death, severe illness, or other debilitating condition but who have produced sufficient material for an assessment. These students will qualify for an appropriate standard research degree award if the Research Degrees Examination Board approves a recommendation from an external examiner based on the available research work completed by the student.
- 6. The Faculty PGR Director must submit a request to the Research Degrees Examination Board for a standard research degree award in these circumstances. The request must include the following:
  - a. Confirmation that the PGR student (or in the case of posthumous awards, their next of kin) agree to the request.
  - b. A statement from the supervisors indicating that they are satisfied there is sufficient available work for an academic judgement to be made.
  - c. Copies of the student's available research work provided by the supervisors. The available work could, for example, include chapters, published work, work prepared for publication, presentations to conferences, and progress reports.
- 7. If the Research Degrees Examination Board agrees to the request, the Board will appoint an appropriate external examiner to assess the PGR student's available research work and to make a recommendation on the award. There will not be an oral examination.
- 8. The Research Degrees Examination Board can approve a standard research degree award (at either doctoral or research master's level as deemed appropriate), notwithstanding that the research degree has not been completed, on the recommendation of an external examiner that the following requirements have been met:
  - a. Enough of the research project has been completed to allow a proper assessment of the scope of the dissertation.
  - b. The PGR student's completed research work is at the standard normally required for the award of the degree in question and demonstrates their grasp of the subject.
  - c. The PGR student's available written material demonstrates their ability to write a dissertation at the required level.
- 9. The requirement to deposit the final version of the dissertation with the Library is waived in these cases.

## Students in the examination process

10. Where a PGR student submitted their dissertation before they became unable to continue because of their death, severe illness, or other debilitating condition, the examination process will proceed if the student (or in the case of posthumous awards, their next of kin) agrees.
11. Examiners must provide a joint statement on whether in their judgement the PGR student would have reached the standard for the award, even if revisions would have been required.
12. Depending on the stage reached, the process will be as follows:
  - a. If the oral examination has not been held, the examiners must submit preliminary and joint reports based on the content of the dissertation only alongside their joint statement.
  - b. If the oral examination has been held, the examiners must submit their preliminary and joint reports covering the dissertation and the oral examination alongside their joint statement.
  - c. If the PGR student has already had an outcome confirmed by the Research Degrees Examination Board and is required to correct errors of substance or resubmit but has not been able to submit their revised dissertation, the examiners must provide a joint statement based on the original examination. If the revised dissertation has been submitted, the examiners must provide a statement in response to the dissertation.
13. The Research Degrees Examination Board must decide on an appropriate outcome in light of the examiners' reports and statement, on the understanding that the PGR student will not be able to make any corrections or resubmit. If an award is confirmed, the requirement to deposit the final version of the dissertation with the Library can be waived in these cases.
14. If the PGR student has been awarded, but there are outstanding minor errors or the final copy of their dissertation has not been deposited with the Library, the Research Degrees Examination Board can decide to waive these requirements to release the certificate.