Policy and Guidance on Research Degrees

Education Committee

Valid from Michaelmas term 2023

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Version history

1.0	2013	Original publication of web-based version of *Policy on research degrees*	Approved by Education Committee 2013, with revisions approved by Graduate Panel/Research Degrees Panel of Education Committee during 2015 to 2018.
2.0	October 2019	Publication of PDF version of document, renamed *Policy and guidance on research degrees* • Revisions to sections 2.3.2 and 7.3.7 regarding timeframes within which reinstatement is permitted; • Additions to 2.3.3 to clarify, as is practice, that Education Committee may approve a change of mode of study where a programme is not offered on both a full-time and part-time basis; • Addition to 2.3.4 to clarify policy on concurrent enrolment • Revision to 2.4.2 to link to 'Paid Work Guidelines for Oxford Graduate Students' rather than reproduce the text of the guidelines • Additions to 2.5 to reflect all dispensations which Education Committee may grant in relation to research degree students • Additions to 4.4.7 and 5.3 to refer to the University's policy on conflicts of interest and supervisors' and students' responsibilities in relation to this policy • Additions to 7.1.4 and 7.2.4, to make clear that the same considerations which apply to the appointment of internal examiners in relation to conflicts of interest, also apply to assessors for transfer and confirmation of status • Addition to 7.3.1 to reflect the fact that from Michaelmas term 2019, all research degree theses must be	Changes regarding timeframes within which reinstatement is permitted approved by Research Degrees Panel, Trinity term 2019 Requirement for all research degree theses to be submitted online via the Research Thesis Digital Submission (RTDS) application (from Michaelmas term 2019) approved by Research Degrees Panel, Hilary term 2019 Other changes and overall revised document approved by the Chair on behalf of Research Degrees Panel, September 2019

		submitted online via the Research Thesis Digital Submission (RTDS) application, and not in hard copy • Minor updates for accuracy, correct URLs, removal of outdated references, and removal of gendered language		
2.1	November 2020	Revisions to sections 7.1.5, 7.2.4, 7.3.3, 7.3.4 and 7.3.5, to reflect the fact that various decisions relating to the conduct of research degree vivas/milestone assessments are now devolved to the relevant board, removing the requirement for Proctorial permission. Addition of Annexes D and E to provide guidance on these devolved decisions	Changes to regulations so that a number of decisions relating to the conduct of research degree vivas/milestone assessments no longer require Proctorial permission, and decisions are devolved to the relevant board, approved by Research Degrees Panel at its Hilary and Trinity term 2020 meetings. Revisions to this Policy and Guidance to reflect the regulation changes and provide further guidance approved by Research Degrees Panel by correspondence, November 2020	
2.2	October 2021	Revisions to sections 7.1, 7.1.1 and 7.2 to emphasise the importance of supervisors making any concerns clear to students and recording these in writing Addition to section 7.1.6 to state that the University's research integrity training should be completed by students before transfer of status, and must be completed before applying for confirmation of status Addition to section 7.3.1 to clarify that no changes to a research degree thesis can be made once leave to supplicate has been granted	Revisions to sections 7.1 and 7.1 on transfer of status approved by Research Degrees Panel at its Trinity term 2021 meeting. Revisions to section 7.2 to mirror these approved by the Chair on behalf of Research Degrees Panel, October 2021. Changes to regulations re research integrity training approved by Research Degrees Panel at its Trinity term 2021 meeting. Addition to this Policy and Guidance to reflect this approved by the Chair on behalf of Research Degrees Panel, October 2021. Changes to regulations to clarify that no changes to a research degree thesis can be made once leave to supplicate has been granted approved by Research Degrees Panel at its	

		Minor revisions to section 7.3.3 to clarify that it is best practice to appoint an academic member of the department/faculty to act as a point of liaison/information, in the event of there being two external examiners		Trinity term 2021 meeting. Addition to this Policy and Guidance to reflect this approved by the Chair on behalf of Research Degrees Panel, October 2021.

Approved by the Chair on behalf of Research Degrees Panel, October 2021. |
		Minor addition to Annex E to add that while the requirement to give notice of a viva according to the regulations is dispensed with if a viva is to be held remotely via video call, the Submissions and Research Degrees Team still requires information on upcoming agreed viva dates		Approved by the Chair on behalf of Research Degrees Panel, October 2021.
		Minor updates to dates/references		Approved by the Chair on behalf of Research Degrees Panel, October 2021.
2.2	October 2022	Addition to section 2.3.1 to provide guidance on the provision of medical evidence for applications for suspension of status		Approved by the Chair on behalf of Research Degrees Panel, September 2022.
		Addition to section 2.5 to make clear that Education Committee can grant permission to reset deadlines for transfer of status, confirmation of status and submission of the thesis in advance, normally for reasons of disability/long-term ill health, employment or significant change in personal circumstances		Approved by the Chair on behalf of Research Degrees Panel, September 2022.
		Addition to section 4.4.7 to include reference to the University's Staff-student relationships Policy		Approved by the Chair on behalf of Research Degrees Panel, September 2022.
		Revisions to section 7.6 to reflect the fact that students are now required only to submit an electronic version of their finalised thesis to the Oxford Research Archive, and are not required to submit a hardbound copy of their thesis to the Bodleian		Change to submission requirements approved by Research Degrees Panel at its Trinity term 2022 meeting. Revisions to this Policy and Guidance to reflect the change approved by the Chair on

		Libraries, with the exception of students who have been granted permanent dispensation from consultation of their entire thesis, and those whose thesis (or part of the thesis) is in a non-standard format which cannot be submitted electronically	behalf of Research Degrees Panel, September 2022.
		Minor updates to dates/references/URLs	Approved by the Chair on behalf of Research Degrees Panel, September 2022.
2.3	October 2023	New section 4.5 to provide requirements on what should be included in codes of practice on postgraduate research student supervision	Approved by Research Degrees Panel at its Trinity term 2023 meeting; final version with minor revisions approved by the Chair of behalf of Research Degrees Panel, August 2023.
		Additions to sections 2.2.2, 2.3.1, 7.1.2 and 7.2.2, to clarify that when a responsible body declines a student's request for extension of time, suspension, extension of PRS status, or deferral of Confirmation of Status (where a student has not already been granted the maximum number of terms which can be granted by the responsible body, and therefore the request cannot be considered by Education Committee), the student should be directed to the University Student Complaints Procedure, in order to make a complaint to the responsible body if they are dissatisfied with the decision	Approved by the Chair on behalf of Research Degrees Panel, September 2023 (following discussion at the Hilary term 2023 meeting of the Panel)
		Additions to sections 3.2 and 5.2 to reflect the need for induction to cover, and for students to be aware of, University regulations and guidance relating to the use of Artificial Intelligence tools	Approved by the Chair on behalf of Research Degrees Panel, September 2023 (following discussion of artificial intelligence tools at the Hilary term 2023 meeting of the Panel)
		Minor revision to Annex D, to reflect updated regulations which remove the requirement to post notice of a research degree examination in Examination Schools	Approved by the Chair on behalf of Research Degrees Panel, September 2023
		Minor updates to dates/references/URLs	Approved by the Chair on behalf of Research Degrees Panel, September 2023

Section 1: Admissions

1.1 Responsibility for the selection and admission of research students

It is the responsibility of Education Committee, through its Research Degrees Panel and Graduate Admissions Committee, to determine the policy, timetable, and process for the admission of research students.

Postgraduate research (PGR) students are admitted as Probationer Research Students (PRS), except in certain cases provided for by special regulation. Divisional boards and faculty boards have the power and responsibility to admit PGR students. In the case of divisional boards, this power is delegated to, and responsibility discharged by, departments and other units designated by a board as a University Admitting Body (UAB).

No person may be admitted as a PGR student unless they have also been admitted as a member of a college, and unless the application for admission as a PGR student has the approval of their college. Colleges collectively agree to admit all those offered a place for graduate study by a UAB.

In the formulation and implementation of its policy and procedures for the admission of research students, all members of the University must be mindful of the University's [Equality Policy](#) and of its responsibilities under the Equality Act (2010). These include the requirement to have 'due regard' to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- Advance equality of opportunity; and
- Foster good relations between people with different 'protected characteristics'.

The University seeks to attract applicants of the highest quality and potential, regardless of background. Decisions on the admission of students will be based on the individual merits of each candidate as assessed against the entry requirements.

1.2 Academic requirements

UABs must only admit applicants who can evidence a strong academic record. The minimum academic requirement that applicants must meet in order to be considered for admission as a research student is a strong upper second-class UK bachelor's degree with honours, or equivalent qualification. This standard may not be lowered, but it may be alternatively demonstrated. For example, alternative evidence of real academic strength and aptitude for the research programme in question may be demonstrated by a strong degree at master's level; relevant professional experience may also be accepted as an alternative for some subjects. The power for waiving the formally stated minimum academic requirement lies with divisional boards which may delegate this power to UABs. Academic waivers must be approved by the appropriate authority at divisional or UAB level, usually the Director of Graduate Studies.

1.3 English language requirements

The University's English language requirements for individual programmes of study, set either at the Higher level or at the Standard level (as specified in the graduate [Application Guide](#)) must be met in full. The requirement for certification of either the Higher level or the

Standard level may be waived if there is suitable alternative evidence of the candidate having met the required standard of English language proficiency. The grounds and procedure for granting such a waiver are set out in full in the English language test waiver policy. The power to waive the requirement for certification lies with divisional boards which may delegate this power to UABs. Language waivers must be approved by the appropriate authority at divisional or UAB level, usually the Director of Graduate Studies.

1.4   Information for applicants

A UAB must ensure that information relating to postgraduate research programmes is clear, accurate and of sufficient detail to enable applicants to make informed choices. It should contain the following as a minimum:

1. The criteria for assessment of applicants to the research programme including: measures of academic ability (degree level etc.); English language requirements; other qualifications and/or experience required; supporting materials required;

2. Deadlines for receipt of applications;

3. Supervisors' research interests and/or projects;

4. Steps applicants should take having identified a potential supervisor i.e. whether it is appropriate to enter into correspondence with the supervisor at this stage or not;

5. Course structure and content, for example: nature and type of qualification; course duration; pattern of teaching, learning and assessment; study and residence and/or attendance requirements;

6. The arrangements that will be put in place for supervising the graduate's work;

7. The induction arrangements;

8. The workspace provided;

9. IT support/ library facilities/ experimental facilities available;

10. Provision of research seminars;

11. Access to research funds;

12. Costs of any associated fieldwork, research trips, or other equipment costs;

13. Provision of formal graduate skills training;

14. Opportunities for developing teaching skills;

15. Opportunities for work experience and internship;

16. Departmental/Faculty social facilities;

17. Departmental/Faculty arrangements for pastoral and welfare support;

18. Specific requirements such as approval from the Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS), health clearance, immunisation.

Additionally, the University provides the following information:

- Fees and living costs;
- Funding opportunities;

- Visa requirements;
- University accommodation, and general information relating to college accommodation;
- Careers advice.

Having made an offer, UABs should inform prospective students of any significant changes to supervisory arrangements or to the programme made between the offer of a place and the start of the course, and the options open to the student in these circumstances. The UAB is also responsible for drawing to the attention of the prospective student any information which should be studied, or courses taken, between the time of offer and time of arrival, and where they might be accessed e.g. English language courses, preparatory reading.

1.5 Making an application

All applicants must submit the following materials in order to be considered for admission to a research programme:

1. A fully completed application form

2. Three academic references

3. Transcript(s) of previous higher education

4. CV/résumé

5. Statement of research interests/research proposal

6. The application fee

Applicants may also be required to supply additional materials with their application, depending on the requirements of the course, as specified in the Course Guide.

The applicant is responsible for providing these materials in sufficient time to meet the published deadlines for applications. Applicants must include in their applications details of all periods of study at university level, and all qualifications attempted whilst at university.

Applicants must ensure that any information or statement provided on the application form is true, accurate, current and complete, and any supporting material is entirely their own original work, except where clearly stated otherwise.

Exceptions to the requirement to supply all of items 1-6 above may be made where students who are already on the register of graduate students, and holding the status of student for another degree, apply to read for a research degree (or exceptionally apply to transfer from their current status to PRS status). Details of the application process for these students are set out within the graduate Application Guide. In all cases the UAB, before making an offer of a place, must ensure that the student meets the required academic standard for admission as a research student.

Applicants for full-time study who, if admitted, would be concurrently registered at another institution are not eligible for admission to Oxford. Exceptions may only be made where such registration is part of a formal collaborative arrangement between the University and the

other institution. Such arrangements must have the approval of the division and Education Committee.

1.6 Selection procedures

The UAB should ensure that:

- Admissions procedures are clear and consistently followed by all staff;

- Entry requirements are reviewed annually;

- All recommendations to admit a student involve the judgement of at least two members of the academic staff with relevant experience and expertise, and additionally must be approved on behalf of the UAB by the Director of Graduate Studies or Admissions Committee;

- Recommendations not to accept may be made by one or more members of staff with relevant experience and additionally must be approved on behalf of the UAB;

- Persons external to the University and its colleges are not involved in admissions recommendations and decisions except where formal agreements, approved by Education Committee, specifically provide for this;

- Admission offers make clear what the applicant must do:

  a) to take up the offer,

  b) to request deferral of entry, or

  c) if they fail to meet any conditions specified in the offer, including conditions set by the college.

In making an offer of a place, the UAB must ensure:

- that the candidate is well-fitted and well-qualified to conduct work for a research degree;

- that appropriate supervision is available for the expected duration of the research programme, and willingness to supervise has been assured;

- that in accepting this student, the supervisor's supervisory load is in line with divisional guidelines;

- that appropriate working space and facilities are available to enable the research to be undertaken.

1.7 Training requirements for admissions

UABs must ensure that admissions panels or committees include at least one member of academic staff who has undertaken appropriate training e.g. the Graduate Admissions Assessors and Admissions Staff Guidance online course (available via the Graduate Admissions handbook for authorised users). UABs are responsible for briefing all those assessing applications on the admissions procedures and the entry requirements.

Section 2: Requirements for study

2.1 Residence and attendance

2.1.1 Minimum residence periods

Work and residence towards a degree is calculated from the term of matriculation. While working in Oxford, graduate students on full-time courses must usually reside within 25 miles of the city centre. There are minimum residence periods which must be met before a degree can be taken. These minima are normally:

Degree	Minimum residence periods
Master of Science by Research	3 terms
Master of Letters	6 terms
M.Litt. after completing Oxford M.Phil./B.Phil./M.St./M.Sc.	3 terms
Doctor of Philosophy	6 terms
D.Phil. after completing Oxford research M.Sc./M.Phil./M.St.	3 terms

Special arrangements exist to enable intermittent residence or vacation residence periods to count towards the overall requirements (see the Examination Regulations for further details).

2.1.2 Vacations for research students

Students on research courses (such as a D.Phil.) should expect to spend a minimum of 44 weeks of the year on their studies.

2.1.3 Dispensations from residence

There may be periods when it is desirable or necessary for research students to work on their research away from Oxford. Applications for dispensation from residence allow the responsible body to dispense a student from not more than three terms of residence 'only on grounds that it is necessary to the student's work that he or she should be allowed to study at some other place than Oxford, or for other good cause'. The most common grounds for dispensation are the need to carry out fieldwork, or to make use of experimental facilities which are not available in Oxford. It is also possible to obtain dispensation if a student's supervisor moves to another University in the middle of the student's course and a suitable replacement cannot be found in Oxford. Applications should be made using the standard university form and in good time before the proposed period of absence.

In relation to applications for dispensation of residence for Probationer Research Students (PRS), the Examination Regulations include the additional clause 'in exceptional circumstances'. Given the increased emphasis on induction and research training, it is the University's expectation that students will not normally be given dispensation from residence in their first year of PRS status.

An exception to the residence requirements is made for a limited number of students admitted to undertake research in the Medical Sciences or MPLS Divisions but with special permission to undertake their research in a well-found (recognised) laboratory outside the University. This permission is granted at the time of application to the University. As such,

these students do not need to apply for dispensation. Details are provided in the Special Regulations of the two divisions, set out in the [Examination Regulations](#).

2.1.4   Attendance requirements for part-time study

Students studying a research course on a part-time basis should attend for a minimum of 30 days each academic year. This requirement, which is included in the special regulations for each research course offered on a part-time basis, is intended to ensure that part-time research students engage with activities (for example seminars and training sessions) within their department or faculty or more widely in the University, as well as providing opportunities for face-to-face meetings with supervisors.

2.2   Time permitted

2.2.1   Time limits

Students working for the D.Phil. are expected to submit their thesis within three or at most four years (12 terms), and within three years (9 terms) for the M.Sc. by Research or the M.Litt. The University places particular importance on the careful definition of a research topic, the structuring and timetabling of the research, and the expeditious writing up of the thesis, in order that this time scale can be met. In addition, funded students should be aware that their funding body will have defined maximum periods of financial support for studentships.

Degree	Time Limits
Master of Science by Research	9 terms
Master of Letters	9 terms
Doctor of Philosophy	12 terms

2.2.2   Extensions

Extensions of time can be given for up to six terms for D.Phil. students, and up to three terms for M.Sc. by Research and M.Litt. students. Requests for any further period of extension must be addressed to Education Committee, indicating whether or not the responsible body supports the request.

Subject areas should not normally give extensions for more than one term at a time, so that a student's progress towards submission can be the subject of regular monitoring by others in addition to the supervisor. Applications for extensions of time should be made using the correct [form](#) before the end of the period in which the student is expected to submit.

Students are encouraged to give early notice if it appears an extension of time will be necessary. Students are asked to indicate on the application for confirmation of status their likely timetable for submission and whether they anticipate having to apply for extension of time. Any subsequent applications for extension of time on the part of students who have not indicated that such an application is likely should be subject to careful scrutiny.

Where a student has received a number of extensions and their prospect of making progress with the thesis is small, then withdrawal (and a later application for reinstatement) should be considered.

Extensions should only be granted in cases where exceptional circumstances have prevented completion within the normal maximum period and where there is a real prospect of the thesis being submitted within the foreseeable future.

Careful consideration should be given to the grounds on which an application is made. Examples of acceptable grounds include: a temporary difficulty in the student's personal life that has slowed progress; interrupted supervision; practical problems with the student's projects.

Applications on medical grounds or on grounds of personal difficulties that have prevented any work progressing would generally be more appropriately handled proactively through suspension of status (retrospective if necessary), whilst those on grounds of disability would normally be handled through an application to Education Committee for adjustment to the mode of study or to the timing of milestones. Students who make an application on grounds that they have been prevented from completing their research by the extent of paid work that they are undertaking should be advised in line with the University's policy on paid work.

When a responsible body declines a request for extension (where a student has not already been granted the maximum number of terms of extension, and therefore the request cannot be considered by Education Committee), the student should be directed to the [University Student Complaints Procedure](), in order to make a complaint to the responsible body if they are dissatisfied with the decision.

2.3   Student status

2.3.1 Suspension of status

If a student cannot work for a particular reason, e.g. illness, family circumstances, financial issues, then application for suspension of status can be sought, for not less than one and not more than three terms at any one time, using the relevant form. Students should be encouraged to contact the relevant University service (counselling, disability, etc.) for help and advice if they have not already done so, before applying for suspension. Such applications will also be considered in connection with election to a student sabbatical office within the University.

Responsible bodies may not allow more than six terms of suspension in total for any student. Requests for any further period of suspension must be addressed to Education Committee, indicating whether or not the responsible body supports the request. When a responsible body declines a request for suspension (where a student has not already been granted the maximum number of terms of suspension, and therefore the request cannot be considered by Education Committee), the student should be directed to the [University Student Complaints Procedure](), in order to make a complaint to the responsible body if they are dissatisfied with the decision.

Requests for suspension made on health grounds would normally be expected to be supported by medical evidence from an appropriate medical professional. If however the student needs to suspend study due to a long-term health condition or disability (for example, due to a flare-up), and evidence of the condition has already been provided to the University (e.g. to the Disability Advisory Service), it will not always be necessary to provide new medical evidence. In such circumstances, consideration should be given, and the

Disability Advisory Service consulted as necessary, as to whether suspension of status is the best option for the student, or whether, if currently studying full-time, they should consider a change to part-time study (either instead of or following a period of suspension) (with permission from Education Committee if necessary; see 2.3.3 below). Switching to part-time study should only be considered if the student is still able to study, but not full-time, and it appears that the disruption is likely to continue to impact the student over the medium to long-term.

In considering applications for suspension of status from those students well past the original number of terms for the course concerned (12 for D.Phil., 9 for M.Sc. by Research and M.Litt.), consideration should be given to whether the student withdrawing, and applying for reinstatement when the thesis is ready for submission, is a more appropriate option.

Funded students
Students who hold Research Council awards and wish to apply for a suspension of status should also make a separate application for suspension to their funding body. This is because funding bodies must specifically approve suspension of the award and agree a consequent extension to the time within which the thesis must be submitted.

Parental leave
Students who give birth during their period of registration for a postgraduate research degree are automatically entitled to suspend their studies for up to 3 terms (one calendar year) of maternity leave. This period of leave is considered separately from the 6 terms of suspension that their faculty or departmental board may allow, and no special application to Education Committee is required. The full policy on parental leave (including paternity and adoption leave) is available from the Student Gateway.

2.3.2   Withdrawal and reinstatement

If a student fails to submit their thesis or fails to transfer or confirm status within the allotted time (details may be found in sections 2.2, 7.1 and 7.2), and without being granted an extension of time, their enrolment should be withdrawn on the student record system. Once a student's enrolment has been withdrawn, they are no longer registered as a student of the University and should not have access to University facilities during this period.

Students may apply to reinstate their status on the graduate register using the relevant form. Reinstatement requires the support of the student's college (to ensure the student remains in good standing with their college) and former supervisor. The candidate's application should be accompanied by a clear work plan and timetable, which should be endorsed by the former supervisor. Where the former supervisor is no longer available, the relevant body will need to appoint an assessor to check on the appropriateness of reinstatement. If the assessment is satisfactory then a new supervisor will need to be found for the purposes of submission. If no one is willing or available, reinstatement should normally be declined. Reinstatement should not be regarded as automatic but is usually allowed for a student who is ready to submit their thesis.

When considering applications for reinstatement, departments/faculties should take into account factors such as the currency and validity of the thesis, the availability of appropriate supervision, and whether the student successfully completed Transfer and Confirmation of Status before their enrolment was withdrawn. In the majority of cases students should be

ready to submit their thesis. In cases where the student did not complete Transfer, a fresh application for admission will be more appropriate. In cases where Confirmation was not completed, reinstatement should be made dependent on completion of an assessment equivalent to Confirmation (the requirement for the milestone might subsequently be waived), and sufficient time on the register should remain available to the student to complete their thesis within the normal time limits.

Doctoral students who withdraw before the end of their fee liability will, on reinstatement, immediately become liable for any outstanding fees up to the required maximum for the D.Phil.

If a student has completed their twelve terms for the D.Phil., then reinstatement will need to include an extension of time (usually for one term).

The relevant body may grant permission for reinstatement provided that:

- the student has spent fewer than eighteen terms on the Register of Students (twenty-seven in the case of part-time students), i.e. has not used all of the terms of extension which the relevant body may grant; **and**

- no more than twenty-four months have passed since the student's enrolment was withdrawn.

If **either** of the above is not the case, then an application for exceptional reinstatement must be made to Education Committee. Applications should only be passed on to Education Committee after scrutiny by and with the endorsement of the relevant body. Students must meet the requirements for reinstatement by the relevant body, and in addition provide a statement explaining why it is reasonable for Education Committee to permit their reinstatement and outlining the circumstances that have prevented earlier submission. Education Committee will take into account the length of time since the student's enrolment was withdrawn; the reasons for the delay; and the views of the relevant body, supervisor and college.

2.3.3   Changes to mode of study

If a student's programme of study is offered on both a full-time and part-time basis, they may apply to change their mode of study from full-time to part-time (and vice versa) once during their studies, except where the special regulations for the course prohibit any change.

Applications must be made using the relevant [form](#) and require the support of the student's supervisor and college. The student must also give the reason for the change and the term of effect. Approval of the application will be the responsibility of the relevant board.

Appropriate grounds for an application for change of mode would include: disability/long-term ill health (if medical evidence indicates that part-time study is feasible but full-time study is not); employment; or a significant change in personal circumstances.

Students may not change mode of study more than once during the course of their studies, unless there are exceptional circumstances. If a student wishes to change mode for a second or subsequent time, an application must be made to Education Committee.

Education Committee can also approve a change of mode of study where a programme is **not** offered on both a full-time and part-time basis, again normally for reasons of disability/long-term ill health, employment or significant change in personal circumstances.

Students should be aware that funding bodies (including RCUK) may have their own restrictions on change to mode of study. In addition, overseas students may be restricted by their visa requirements. Changes to mode of study will affect tuition fees, completion dates and milestone dates (if applicable), and may also affect entitlement to some University and college services, and other entitlements such as Council Tax exemptions.

2.3.4 Concurrent enrolment

Full-time students may not be concurrently enrolled on another award-bearing programme at this or another university. The exception to this is where there is an overlap of a short period of time between the formal end of one programme and the beginning of another or similar (e.g. if a student begins a research degree programme before formal completion of a taught postgraduate programme). Advice should be sought from the relevant division, and, if necessary, Education Committee, if there is any uncertainty regarding the implementation of this policy in a particular student case.

2.4 Work, including teaching

2.4.1 Teaching by graduate students

The University aims to give postgraduate research (PGR) students the best possible opportunity for personal and career development including through the provision of teaching opportunities. Teaching and demonstrating to others provides students with an opportunity to develop a range of personal skills, and can also reinforce PGR students' own knowledge of their subject. In addition, teaching experience is vital for students intending to pursue an academic career path. The University is committed to ensuring transparency and equity in the offering of teaching opportunities to PGR students.

2.4.1.1 Minimum and maximum levels of teaching opportunities to be offered

The University encourages departments and faculties to commit to providing at least minimum levels of teaching opportunities for PGR students and indicate what these might be. However this will vary significantly by subject area and the University cannot guarantee teaching opportunities as part of the research programme.

The primary focus for all students should be their research, and so the amount of teaching offered and undertaken will vary at the individual level. Factors which need to be considered when attempting to identify minimum and maximum levels of teaching opportunities for students at an individual level include:

- whether or not the student has reached an appropriate stage in their research;
- Research Council guidelines;
- the views of individual supervisors;
- the balance required between providing opportunities for teaching experience and placing too much responsibility on PGR students;

Any decision about the provision of teaching opportunities for a student should be made with the aim of serving the best interests of the student in the context of observing the teaching quality requirements of the collegiate University.

2.4.1.2 Requirements

Stage of research

Students should normally have completed (or had waived) transfer of status before participating in any teaching activities. It is not appropriate for Probationer Research Students (PRS) to take on substantial teaching commitments such as several weeks of tutorials (although first year doctoral students may act as demonstrators, take translation classes, support academic study skills development etc.).

Training

The University's explicit policy is that no PGR student should be allowed to teach without some form of initial training. At the very minimum, students should undertake a 'Preparation for learning and teaching at Oxford (PLTO)' course, which is provided by divisions and departments/faculties. Students may also go on to complete the 'Advancing Teaching and Learning (ATL) programme' offered by the University's Centre for Teaching and Learning, successful completion of which leads to designation as an Associate Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (AFHEA). The ATL programme is available in two streams: Sciences, and Humanities and Social Sciences.

Supervisor guidance and permission

Before participating in any teaching, students should first seek agreement from their supervisor, and advice as to whether their research is making good progress and they are expected to complete on time. The supervisor's views should be recorded in Graduate Supervision Reporting (GSR).

2.4.1.3 Restrictions

Research Councils and other funding bodies may impose a restriction on the number of hours' teaching a student may do each week. Departments and faculties may also impose similar restrictions, which usually involve a limit of 5-6 hours per week (including preparation time).

Teaching by PGR students will generally only be at undergraduate level, though there may be a small number of circumstances in which teaching at other levels may be appropriate.

2.4.1.4 Practice in departments and faculties

In order to offer teaching opportunities to students, departments and faculties are asked to ensure the following is in place, and made known to students:

Promotion of opportunities	- clear and widely accessible mechanisms by which opportunities for PGR teaching are advertised and fairly distributed - a widely accessible place where individual students are able to indicate their interest in undertaking such teaching

Hours	• a statement for prospective and current students on the likely availability of teaching opportunities • a statement of a department or faculty's guidance on the maximum number of hours of teaching which it would expect PGR students to undertake
Training	• a statement of a department or faculty's provision of training for teaching making clear that students are not permitted to undertake teaching until they have participated in training. Where possible, training should be undertaken under the auspices of the central University scheme for the development of teaching • a pointer to any guidance provided by the faculty/department to assist those undertaking teaching
Agreed expectations	• a mechanism to ensure that, where the teaching/demonstrating is undertaken on behalf of the department or faculty, a simple written statement setting out the expectations on both sides (hours of work, conditions, length of contract and rates of pay), and the support available within the department/ faculty, will be provided for the student(s) concerned
Tutorial teaching	• mechanisms for liaising with colleges to ensure an appropriate balance of teaching by senior staff and by graduate students is maintained for programmes of tutorials centrally organised by faculties and departments
Monitoring and mentoring	• an indication of the form of mentoring/supervision and monitoring/review which will be provided for PGR students who teach on behalf of the department/faculty (which could be via supervisors, course co-ordinators, subject tutors or Directors of Undergraduate Studies, or through being part of a larger teaching team) • the procedure by which the faculty/department would deal with complaints about the quality of teaching provided by graduate students

2.4.2 Non- academic- related paid work

The relevant guidance is available as Paid Work Guidelines for Oxford Graduate Students.

2.5   Applications outside normal limits

In cases where requests from students are outside the normal limits governing graduate students, application for dispensation must be made to [Education Committee](). These applications normally relate to:

- extensions of time beyond the normal limits;

- suspension of status beyond the normal limits;

- permission to defer transfer of status beyond the normal limits;

- permission to defer confirmation of status beyond the normal limits;

- reinstatement of status beyond the normal limits;

- changes to mode of study beyond that which can be permitted by the relevant board, or where a programme is not normally offered on both a full and part-time basis;

- permission to reset deadlines for transfer of status, confirmation of status and submission of the thesis in advance (rather than when normal limits have already been reached), normally for reasons of disability/long-term ill health, employment or significant change in personal circumstances, where a student does not however need to formally change mode of study to part-time (i.e. 0.5 FTE);

- admission directly to D.Phil. status of suitably qualified candidates from outside Oxford;

- antedated admission, for students transferring to Oxford along with their supervisor;

- dispensation from residence for longer than the normal limits.

Applications for these matters require support from college and by or on behalf of the division.

Section 3: Induction

3.1 Responsibility for induction

The University's Education Committee is responsible for the maintenance of a timetable for Week 0 of Michaelmas Term determining the days on which departments and colleges shall provide an induction programme for graduate students. The current timetable is as follows:

	9am – 1pm	1pm – 5pm	5pm onwards
Monday	Dept/Fac	Dept/Fac	College
Tuesday	Dept/Fac	Dept/Fac	Dept/Fac
Wednesday	College	College	College
Thursday	College	Dept/Fac(until 6pm)	College
Friday	Dept/Fac	College	College

It is the responsibility of the responsible board to provide a programme of induction for its students, which will sit alongside the induction provided to students by their colleges. During Week 0 of Michaelmas Term this programme must be delivered in accordance with the agreed timetable with colleges, but the programme may extend beyond Week 0 over the course of the first term.

The programme of induction should enable students to begin their studies with an understanding of the academic and social environment within which they will be working and must include (but is not confined to) all essential aspects of induction as listed in subsection 3.2. The board is responsible for determining who delivers each element of induction, e.g. the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), research group leader, or the individual supervisor. Responsible boards should ensure that the induction programme takes into account the diverse backgrounds of a typical student cohort, and the multiple adjustments that students are making at this time, especially those who have recently arrived from overseas.

3.2 Content of induction

Responsible boards should ensure that the programme of induction includes the following:

1. facilities available for students within the department or faculty;

2. relevant health and safety practices within the group and department or faculty;

3. introduction to staff and their roles and an opportunity to meet socially and informally with other students and staff in the department, especially the DGS;

4. orientation to the degree programme i.e. transfer of status, methods of assessment and examination, regulations and other requirements, as well as general processes such as annual registration;

5. supervision arrangements, including establishing appropriate working patterns, the minimum frequency of supervision meetings and the purpose of such meetings, evaluation, monitoring and reporting procedures;

6. wider academic opportunities (seminars, journal clubs, research networks) including opportunities for meeting other research students and staff and opportunities to present research to peers;

7. teaching opportunities (where appropriate);

8. skills training available within and outside the subject (see Section 6 of this policy);

9. student welfare (in the departmental or faculty context);

10. academic expectations of students and responsibilities of students (see Section 5 of this policy);

11. typical challenges which may face the research student and sources of support and guidance including support for developing academic skills for research;

12. integrity in research, intellectual property rights, and guidance on good academic practice and the avoidance of plagiarism (including guidance on the use of Artificial Intelligence tools, as covered in the University's guidance on Publication and Authorship, and regulations forbidding material generated by such tools to be submitted for examination);

13. ethical research review processes (where appropriate);

14. English language provision available via the Language Centre (where appropriate);

15. how to raise concerns and/or make a complaint.

Examples of good practice in graduate induction may be found at Annex A.

3.3 Disabled students

Where students are admitted who have disclosed a disability, the responsible board should ensure that any special requirements to support the student on course are understood, put in place and communicated as necessary. The board should discuss these requirements with the student and take advice from the Disability Advisory Service.

Additionally, induction is a good opportunity to inform students who have not yet disclosed a disability that it is in their own interests to do so for their better support.

Section 4: Supervision

4.1 Appointment of the supervisor

Divisional boards and department/faculty boards are responsible for placing every research student that they admit under the supervision of a member of the University or other competent person, and for keeping the performance of the person in the role under review. In the case of divisional boards, this responsibility is delegated to, and discharged by, departmental/ faculty boards. A responsible board may, for sufficient reason, change the supervisor of any student, or arrange for joint supervision by more than one supervisor, if it deems it necessary.

The responsible board must ensure that the person(s) appointed is appropriately qualified according to stated criteria and is aware of and implements divisional policy relating to the training needs of new and inexperienced supervisors. The board should be aware of the arrangements provided at all levels (department/faculty/division/University) for training for supervisors (especially new supervisors) and for continuing staff development in connection with all aspects of research supervision; and ensure that there is advice available for colleagues on training needs as appropriate.

The responsible board must also ensure that appropriate substitute arrangements are made in the case of the supervisor's absence, illness or sabbatical leave.

It must be recognised that, once admitted, a research student remains the responsibility of that board (unless formally transferred elsewhere) while the student is entitled to be on the register of graduate students.

Where permitted by the terms of any sponsorship agreement, supervisory responsibilities can be changed at the request of either the student or a supervisor. This falls under the remit of the responsible board.

4.2 Notification to the student

New students should be made aware of when they can expect their supervisor to be appointed, where it is not the practice to assign supervisors before admission.

Each research student should be given an identified single point of contact who is the main supervisor. The student should be advised who the alternative contact is if the main supervisor is not available. This may either be the second supervisor or an additional designated member of academic staff able to provide advice and support. To avoid misunderstandings, the names, contact details and responsibilities of the main and any other supervisors should be provided to research students at registration and readily available throughout their programme.

In addition to advising the student about the appointment of the supervisor, the responsible body should also ensure that as soon as possible students know:

- how to contact the appropriate Director of Graduate Studies;

- how to contact the designated supervisor(s);

- the name and role of the student's academic advisor in the department or faculty or other person to whom they can go in addition to the supervisor(s).

4.3   Monitoring supervision

The responsible board should be in a position to know whether reports have been completed by both student and supervisor and returned at the end of each reporting period, up to and including the term in which the student submits their thesis but not beyond this term. It is important that the Director of Graduate Studies or other officer monitors the return of reports, and pursues unreturned reports after an appropriate time. The Director of Graduate Studies should review all reports via Graduate Supervision Reporting (GSR) and investigate any concerns that are likely to affect the progress of the student's research.

4.4   Responsibilities of the supervisor

4.4.1   Agreeing to supervise

In agreeing to supervise a research student, the supervisor must recognise and accept the responsibilities both to the student and to the relevant department, faculty and division implicit in the supervisory relationship.

4.4.2   Prior to arrival and first meeting

Where possible, the supervisor should assign the student some directed reading before arrival. This might be of a general background nature so as to put the student in a position to discuss the topic with the supervisor soon after arrival, or it might form the start of a survey of current literature. The supervisor is required to meet the student not later than the second week of Full Term.

4.4.3   The initial term

The supervisor should ensure, in co-operation with the student, that the main framework for the student's work is established as speedily as possible during the first term.

This may include all or some of the following:

- the means by which the research student and supervisor(s) will communicate and how and when they will arrange regular meetings and monitor progress;

- where there is a co-supervisor or a supervisory team, the supervisor should co-ordinate advice and guidance, and ensure that respective responsibilities are clear both to academic colleagues and to the student;

- where a student undertakes research as part of a team or group, the supervisor should make clear the way in which the student's own contribution fits into the work of the remainder of the group;

- work to establish a clear project proposal with a good prospect of completion within the required time scale, and to identify the initial stages and early objectives of the project, taking account of the sponsor's requirements where appropriate;

- where completion of an initial research training course is required, identification of the structure, timetable and requirements of the course;

- preliminary identification by the student and supervisor(s) of the skills, knowledge and aptitudes (including English for Academic Purposes) which are likely to be required for the successful completion of the research programme, and arrangements for supporting their acquisition or development;

- identifying appropriate resources to support the research project and how these are to be accessed (including consumables, staffing and working facilities);

- where the student's research forms part of a funded research programme, the supervisor should ensure that sufficient financial support will be available for the duration of the student's period of study: if there is any doubt, they should agree with the student an alternative fallback project at an early stage;

- to ensure that appropriate health and safety training is undertaken by the student;

- to advise at an early stage on experimental design and the effective collection and storage of data;

- to draw to the student's attention the need to consider any ethical issues which may arise during the course and any requirements for ethical approval (for further information see https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/governance/ethics);

- to identify appropriate colleagues (in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies for the department/ faculty), where during their first year of research a student wishes, in addition to contact with their supervisor(s), to have limited consultation with one or two other academics, and to arrange for an approach to them by the student.

4.4.4 Supervisory meetings

The University does not stipulate (beyond the use of the term 'regularly') the number of meetings between research student and supervisor which may be expected each term, since this will vary widely according to the subject, the individual, and the stage of the research reached. However, each department/faculty has been asked (via divisional codes of practice for supervision) to recommend a minimum frequency of formal supervisory contact for resident students and to state this on departmental websites. While variation from this figure is permissible, the onus will be on the student and supervisor jointly to agree to deviate from the recommendation. In addition, the University does not set down a common format for recording the outcomes of those meetings, although it endorses the view that both supervisors and students should keep some record of supervisory meetings.

Supervisors should:

- meet with the student regularly in accordance with divisional and departmental/ faculty guidelines and as agreed with the student;

- request written work as appropriate and in accordance with the plan discussed with the student, and return submitted work with constructive criticism within a reasonable time;

- be accessible to the student at appropriate times when advice is needed and respond to requests for advice within a reasonable timescale;

- assist the student to work within a planned framework and timetable (in particular by conducting regular reviews of the student's progress);

- monitor the student's ability to write a coherent account of their work in good English;

- avoid unnecessary delays in the progress of the research;

- pursue opportunities for the student to discuss their work with others in the wider academic community (including the presentation of research outcomes where relevant) at University, national and international level.
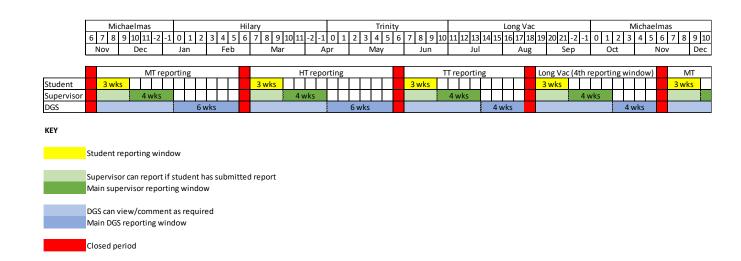
4.4.5 Progress reports

It is the responsibility of the supervisor to provide the student with regular information as to the student's progress (to ensure that the student feels properly directed and able to communicate with the supervisor) and, where problems arise, provide guidance and assistance as to necessary corrective action. The supervisor should alert the Director of Graduate Studies to any problems experienced in supervising the student.

The completion of the quarterly supervision report, to which both student and supervisor contribute via Graduate Supervision Reporting (GSR), is mandatory for supervisors. Departments/ faculties are responsible for taking any action required in cases of non-submission by supervisors.

Timetable for reporting

Students will have a three week reporting window, and supervisors will have a four week reporting window, but they will also be able to report as soon as the student has submitted their report. The Director of Graduate Studies is able to view reports and may submit comments at any time during the reporting period. The college advisor may also view reports at any time and record the number of meetings held with the student. The exact reporting dates will be published in Graduate Supervision Reporting (GSR), following the timetable below:

	Michaelmas							Hilary								Trinity							Long Vac													Michaelmas				
	6	7	8	9 |10|11|-2|-1| 0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9 |10|11|-2|-1| 0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9 |10|11|12|13|14|15|16|17|18|19|20|21|-2|-1| 0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9 |10
	Nov		Dec		Jan		Feb		Mar		Apr		May		Jun		Jul		Aug		Sep		Oct		Nov		Dec	

	MT reporting	HT reporting	TT reporting	Long Vac (4th reporting window)	MT
Student	3 wks	3 wks	3 wks	3 wks	3 wks
Supervisor	4 wks	4 wks	4 wks	4 wks	
DGS	6 wks	6 wks	4 wks	4 wks	

KEY

- Student reporting window
- Supervisor can report if student has submitted report
- Main supervisor reporting window
- DGS can view/comment as required
- Main DGS reporting window
- Closed period

Content of reports

The discussion of the information to be recorded in the supervision report by the student and supervisor should be viewed as part of a regular review of progress. Each report should also state the nature and extent of recent contact with the student, and, if there has been none, state why this is so. At the end of the first term, the supervisor and student should review not only academic progress, but also how well the student has adjusted to their new work environment, how well the environment is meeting their needs, and plans to remedy any deficiency. The quarterly report should also include a review of the student's professional and career development since the previous report, giving both the student and supervisor an opportunity to reflect on skills already developed and to think about areas for further development. The student is also invited to indicate the level of contact they have had with their college advisor during the reporting period.

Flagging of concerns

GSR includes a mechanism by which a student or supervisor may flag that they have concerns about the student's academic progress. This flag will also be visible to the DGS and college advisor. The flagging system should only be used for concerns about academic progress or problems with the project. It should not be used to report a concern about problems in the student-supervisor relationship or in the work environment. These concerns should be raised with the DGS in the first instance, and be pursued through the department/ faculty's complaints procedure if necessary. If the supervisor has concerns about the student's academic progress, these should be discussed with the student before being flagged on GSR.

The flagging mechanism in GSR has three categories: minor concerns, major concerns, or severe concerns. The DGS should review all flagged concerns and take action as appropriate. A severe concern flagged in GSR should result in a meeting with the DGS without delay (this may be via Microsoft Teams or similar in the case of part-time students, or if a student is otherwise not in Oxford). The DGS should note in GSR the action being taken to resolve the matter.

4.4.6 Cover for absence

The supervisor should avoid absence on leave without appropriate temporary supervision having been arranged for the student. (Leave will not normally be approved without such arrangements being in place.) Heads of department/faculty should take this requirement into account when managing requests for sabbatical leave.

4.4.7 Other responsibilities

The supervisor is expected to:

- have reasonable familiarity with institutional, national and international expectations relating to research environments, research supervision and research training (see especially the relevant sections of the [UK Quality Code](#), specifically the [advice and guidance on research degrees](#));

- be familiar with the [University Conflict of Interest Policy](#) and [associated guidance](#), in particular its requirements relating to research supervision, and to disclose any

conflict of interest, or any circumstances that might reasonably give rise to *the perception* of conflict of interest, in accordance with this Policy;

- be familiar with the University Staff-student relationships Policy, and to disclose any close personal or intimate relationship with a student for whom they have any responsibility in accordance with this Policy;

- engage in continuing professional development to equip them to supervise research students, and to meet requirements for continuing professional development;

- assist the student with the preparation, timetable and submission of material relating to applications for transfer of status, for re-admission after completion of a preliminary research training or other course, and for confirmation of status, and to provide appropriate feedback, especially where the student has failed to meet the required standards;

- advise the student on the timing of the submission of the thesis and to consult with the student in order to make recommendations for the appointment of examiners;

- encourage the student to obtain knowledge and information about career opportunities and to alert the student, where necessary, to other services provided within the University and elsewhere.

4.4.8   Health and safety

Supervisors of all students, whether in the arts or sciences, should consider carefully the safety implications of their students' research. Those supervising students (particularly in the sciences) are responsible for all aspects of safety under their control, and in particular for the safe conduct of all experiments carried out in the course of their students' research. In the event of an accident, inadequate supervision may render the supervisor liable to prosecution. Supervisors should also ensure that their students are aware that in the event of injury to other persons as a result of their negligence, the student could be subject to civil claims for damages. Advice on the legal responsibilities for safety may be obtained from the University Safety Office. For their part, students must carry out research with proper regard to good health and safety practices. Supervisors and students should be aware of the need for adequate health insurance and health precautions when travelling abroad. Relevant guidance is given in the University Safety Office's policy statement on Overseas travel and fieldwork and the University's Travel insurance policy. Advice on travel health including immunisations is available from the Travel Health Clinic of the University Occupational Health Service.

4.5   Codes of practice on postgraduate research student supervision

The four divisions and the Department for Continuing Education are each required to publish a code of practice on postgraduate research student supervision. Codes of practice should be made easily available and promoted regularly to all relevant academic and administrative staff, and to postgraduate research students, with links to codes of practice provided in other appropriate staff and student-facing documents.

The codes of practice will differ according to subject disciplinary requirements. However, the following elements should be included in all codes of practice:

- Information on who is eligible to supervise postgraduate research students, e.g. the kind of post which a supervisor must hold. There may be different requirements for a 'main' or 'primary' supervisor, where there is more than one supervisor.

- Guidance on numbers of supervisors, i.e. whether there must or may be more than one supervisor per student.

- Guidance on co-supervision. This will vary according to subject disciplinary requirements, but should include guidance on how co-supervisors or supervisory teams should work together and communicate with students they are supervising.

- Requirements and guidance on supervisory load. Codes of practice should set a maximum number of FTE students per supervisor (which may be different for different categories of academic staff). If setting a precise number is not possible, at a minimum codes of practice should require that students are not disadvantaged by the appointment as a supervisor of someone who cannot take on the responsibilities being asked of them, by giving consideration to a potential supervisor's overall workload and responsibilities, including their current number of supervisees.

- Responsibilities of the supervisor. This should refer to the requirements in section 4.4 of this *Policy and Guidance*. It should explicitly refer to the supervisor's responsibility to complete Graduate Supervision Reporting (GSR) and to ensure that any concerns regarding a student's progress are discussed with the student and recorded in writing (particularly if there are concerns prior to the Transfer of Status or Confirmation of Status assessment; see sections 7.1 and 7.2 of this *Policy and Guidance*). It may also include useful material such as checklists for the supervisor, and discipline-specific material such as responsibilities relating to fieldwork. The specific responsibilities of the 'main' or 'primary' supervisor, where a student has co-supervisors, should be included.

- Requirements on frequency of supervisory meetings. This may include, where relevant, different requirements for meetings with the main supervisor and for meetings with members of the supervisory team.

- Requirements for supervisor training, e.g. completion of the relevant online course on supervision developed by the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL). Divisions/the Department for Continuing Education are encouraged to set requirements for refresher training for experienced supervisors, as well as requiring training for new supervisors. Provision of further training and support (e.g. workshops where experience and good practice can be shared; mentoring provision) in addition to compulsory training is also strongly encouraged, and codes of practice should point to what is available/required in the relevant division/department.

- Requirements for cover for a supervisor's absence. Codes of practice should make clear that departments/faculties are responsible for arranging appropriate cover in terms of supervisory responsibilities, in the event of a supervisor's planned or unplanned absence.

- Student access to support other than the supervisor. Codes of practice should require that departments/faculties ensure that students have access to one or more named persons in the department/faculty whom they can contact in addition to their supervisor if necessary. At a minimum, this should be the Director of Graduate Studies or equivalent. It should be made explicitly clear who to contact if a student has concerns about the supervisory relationship and does not feel able to speak to their supervisor. Codes of practice should also point to other sources of academic and pastoral support in the department/faculty or across the wider collegiate University, such as central student support services and college advisors.

- Staff-student relationships policy. Codes of practice should link (rather than use text which may become outdated) to the current staff-student relationships policy[1].

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[1] https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/staff-student-relationships

Section 5: Responsibilities of the student

5.1   Overriding responsibility

The University expects students to accept their obligation to act as responsible members of the University's academic community. Students are also expected to take ultimate responsibility for their research programme and to develop an appropriate working relationship with their supervisor(s).

5.2   The research programme

In relation to the research programme, it is important for the student:

- to programme and undertake work according to an agreed timetable, and to keep relevant records of all aspects of the work in such a way that they can be accessed and understood by anyone with a legitimate need to see them;

- to take responsibility for the development of subject-specific research training and personal and professional skills, and to make positive use of the University's teaching and learning facilities, and opportunities for this development;

- to seek out and follow the regulations applying to the research programme, and to seek clarification, where necessary; and to be familiar with other relevant regulations and policies, including health and safety, intellectual property, data handling, research integrity, good academic practice and the avoidance of plagiarism (including guidance on the use of Artificial Intelligence tools, as covered in the University's guidance on Publication and Authorship, and regulations forbidding material generated by such tools to be submitted for examination), and conflicts of interest;

- to raise problems or difficulties with the relevant authority so that appropriate guidance may be offered;

- to carry out research with proper regard to good health and safety practices, and to be aware of the need for adequate health insurance and health precautions when travelling abroad;

- to understand the demands of a research degree and to devote sufficient time to study to make satisfactory progress and to complete each stage of the degree by the deadlines set out in the Examination Regulations;

- to work towards a suitable standard of written and spoken English for transfer and confirmation and for the final submission of the thesis.

It is for the student to ensure that competing demands on their time are minimised and to ensure that their supervisor is aware of, and approves, commitments (e.g. paid work, conferences) or time away that might impinge on the student's work.

5.3   Working with the supervisor

In order to make the most effective use of supervision, the student should endeavour to develop an appropriate working pattern, including an agreed and professional relationship with the supervisor(s). To facilitate this, the student should discuss with the supervisor the type of guidance and comment which they find most helpful, and agree a schedule of

meetings. The student should also be aware of their joint responsibility with the supervisor to ensure that regular and frequent contact is maintained, and be encouraged to take the initiative to maintain contact when necessary

In working with supervisors or other academic staff, students should also:

- recognise the demands made on a supervisor's time and the need to prepare adequately for meetings and to observe deadlines;

- accept the importance of constructive criticism within the supervisory relationship, and seek a full assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of any work;

- give full weight to any suggested guidance and corrective action proposed by the supervisor in the event of problems;

- co-operate with the supervisor to produce detailed parallel reports on progress at the end of each term via Graduate Supervision Reporting;

- discuss their skills training needs with the supervisor, both informally during regular supervisory contacts and formally at particular times as detailed in subject handbooks;

- make appropriate use of any guidance available relating to the student's career after successful completion of a research degree, for example, via the Careers Service;

- inform the supervisor as soon as possible of any circumstance which might lead to interruption of study;

- where the student feels that there are good grounds for contemplating a change of supervision arrangements, discuss this with the existing supervisor, or, if this presents a difficulty, discuss this with the DGS or other appropriate officer or advisor, or with a college advisor.

5.4   Submission and completion

The requirements in relation to submission are set out in full in the Examination Regulations; however in particular it is essential for the student:

- to ensure that their written English is of the necessary standard for the submission of a thesis;

- to be prepared to defend the subject of the thesis in fluent English at the viva;

- to allow sufficient time for writing up and to pay particular attention to final proof reading;

- to decide when they wish to submit the thesis for examination, having provided the supervisor with sufficient time to comment on the final draft and having taken account of the supervisor's opinion;

- to be aware of the necessary steps in the examination process and the timescales required.

Section 6: Researcher development (skills training)

The University is committed to ensuring that students have opportunities to develop and refine a range of skills as an integral part of a research degree programme, whether these are:

- subject-specific skills (including any skills required for inter-disciplinary aspects of a topic);

- general research training skills;

- personal and professional skills.

Students' skills training needs should be assessed formally on at least three occasions during the student's programme: in the initial general review in the first term (see section 4.4.3), in preparation for transfer of status (where the transfer of status form has been amended accordingly) and at confirmation of status. It is, however, an integral part of the supervisor's role to continue to monitor and advise the student on their skills training needs, to draw these to the attention of the research student, and advise on how these might be addressed.

Responsible boards must ensure that students have access to skills training. This entails regular review of the provision made for their students at department/ faculty, divisional and University level to ensure it comprehends the needs of students and expectations of the University. This will reflect the discipline, subject and context of the research. Students and their supervisors should review regularly (both informally during supervisory meetings and formally at the three points identified above) the skills that may be of benefit to the student in relation to: subject-specific needs, analytical and research skills, and personal and professional skills. (Where necessary, support for language and academic writing skills should also be considered.) It is sometimes found helpful to link such reviews to the 'Researcher Development Statement' (an evolution of the Research Councils' Joint Skills Statement). Supervisors should alert the relevant Graduate Studies Committee/ Director of Graduate Studies to the existence of training needs not yet catered for by the faculty/ department or the University.

The University strategy for Postgraduate Research Student Development sets out in more detail the University's expectations for PGR student development.

Section 7: Examination

7.1   Transfer of Status

Most commencing research students are registered as Probationer Research Students (PRS), and/or for a preliminary research training master's course. Regulations governing applications for transfer of status are set out for each subject within the [Examination Regulations](#) or in course handbooks.

The assessment for transfer of status is a formal requirement, and success should not be considered a foregone conclusion by either the candidate or the assessors.

As set out in section 4.4.5 of this document, supervisors have a responsibility to provide the student with regular information as to the student's progress, to provide guidance and assistance, and to flag concerns about the student's academic progress via [Graduate Supervision Reporting (GSR)](#) if necessary.

Where supervisors have concerns regarding a student's progress prior to the transfer of status examination, or following an unsuccessful first attempt, it is particularly important that these concerns are made clear to the student and recorded in writing, and that the student is provided with guidance in writing on all the options open to them. This could include flagging concerns via GSR; recording concerns in the GSO.2 application to transfer status form; and sending a brief note by e-mail after any relevant verbal discussion of concerns and guidance on options. While students are expected to take ultimate responsibility for their research programme (as set out in section 5.1 of this document), it is important that they are able to make decisions based on knowledge of supervisor concerns and of the options available.

Supervisors should note that expressing concerns regarding a student's readiness to transfer status does not stop the student from applying for transfer; the GSO.2 form allows the supervisor to state whether they have serious concerns, mild concerns or no concerns regarding the student's readiness to apply for transfer. If they have any concerns, these should have been discussed with the student beforehand, but the student may still choose to apply if they have reached the relevant time limit for doing so.

Supervisors are also reminded that, as required by the General Regulations Governing Research Degrees[2], they must inform the relevant board at once if they are of the opinion that a PRS is unlikely to reach the standard required for admission at least to the status of student for the Degree of Master of Letters or of Science.

7.1.1   Guidance for students and assessors

In addition to the regulations governing applications for transfer of status, course handbooks must provide information on the process. The relevant Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) and/or the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) should ensure that the transfer procedure in a subject includes:

- criteria against which applications for transfer to doctoral status (or for the relevant lower degree) will be assessed;

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[2] https://examregs.admin.ox.ac.uk/Regulation?code=grgoveresedegr

- instructions about the materials required for the transfer application;

- instructions to the student as to the nature of the required assessment process and the role of the assessors;

- information for students about the range of possible outcomes that may be recommended by the assessors, including transfer to the relevant lower degree, subject to the opportunity for further application;

- information for students about their options if for good reason they are not ready to apply for transfer of status within the timeframe set out in regulations, including the deferral of transfer for one or two terms which may be granted by the relevant divisional or departmental body.

  Students should be advised of the options which may be appropriate to their circumstances, such as withdrawal from the programme, suspension of studies, or (if currently full-time) a transfer to part-time status (which can be granted via an application to Education Committee, if a programme is not normally offered on a part-time basis).

  Students who are still not ready to transfer after deferral of transfer for one or two terms has been granted should also be made aware of the possibility, in exceptional circumstances, of an application to Education Committee for further deferral of transfer. In any mention of this in course handbooks, it should be made clear that there would be no guarantee of such an application being successful, and that one of the other options above would usually be more appropriate.

  The option of an exceptional application to Education Committee should not be seen as standard, and would usually only be highlighted to students who are not ready to transfer having reached the limit of deferrals, following review of their situation by the Director of Graduate Studies and supervisor. Any application would need to demonstrate that there was a realistic prospect of the student making progress and passing Transfer if a further deferral were granted.

- instructions to assessors as to the nature of the required assessment process and of the assessment report;

- a review of the assessment report by the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) and/or the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS);

- (for non-native English speakers) an indication of the assessors' view of the student's ability to present and defend the work in English;

- appropriate feedback to the applicant, especially where an application has been unsuccessful;

- the University procedure for appeals;

- the timeframe for the return of assessment reports to the department (as a guide, three weeks after the assessment is considered a reasonable maximum).

In addition, for PRS who are required to take a master's course during the course of the first year, departments should ensure their own policies are clear. If the transfer depends on achieving a specified level in the initial master's course, a clear definition of the required level should be provided to students.

7.1.2   Timing of transfer

Students must transfer status before the end of their fourth term (the eighth for part-time students). It is possible for the responsible board to stipulate variations within these limits. Exceptions, where they apply, are set out in Special Regulations.

Subject to the approval of the responsible divisional or Continuing Education board as appropriate, and for good cause, a full-time student may be permitted to hold the status of PRS (prior to the first application for transfer of status) for a further one or two terms (a part-time student for a further one to four terms).

Applications for extension should be made to the relevant board using form GSO.2b. Requests for any further extension of PRS status must be addressed to Education Committee, indicating whether or not the responsible body supports the application.

When a responsible body declines a request for extension of PRS status (where a student has not already been granted the maximum number of terms of extension, and therefore the request cannot be considered by Education Committee), the student should be directed to the University Student Complaints Procedure, in order to make a complaint to the responsible body if they are dissatisfied with the decision.

7.1.3   Application for transfer

To apply for transfer to D.Phil. status, students must submit a completed GSO.2 form, available from the Graduate Progression Forms page (students should select the correct version of the form for their division). Students of some subjects will also need to submit an additional subject-specific form, also available from this page.

7.1.4   The assessors

It is the University's expectation that assessments for transfer of status will be undertaken by academic staff employed within the collegiate University. The assessors should be sufficiently distant from the candidate and supervisor, both academically and personally, to ensure an impartial and objective opinion of the submitted work. It is accepted, however, that in small departments/faculties there will inevitably have been some prior academic interaction between the assessor and candidate.

- The supervisor should not be appointed as an assessor;

- Anyone who has had substantial co-authoring or collaborative involvement in the candidate's work should not be appointed as an assessor;

- Anyone having a close personal relationship with the candidate or supervisor should not be appointed as an assessor.

It is permissible for an assessor for transfer of status to be subsequently appointed as an internal examiner of the thesis.

On rare occasions, in all subjects, there may be a strong case for having assessors who are external to the University. Where a division, board or department is willing to approve this, external assessors may be used, any fee to be paid by the board.

The appointment of the assessor is formally the responsibility of the relevant board, but the supervisor may make recommendations where appropriate.

7.1.5 The assessment process

Transfer applications must be considered by two assessors. Although arrangements for assessing applications vary from subject to subject, and may involve a committee including the supervisor, it is essential to ensure a significant independent element, especially where there may be any doubt about the outcome. **The process of assessment must always include an interview with the student**. In exceptional circumstances, one or more of the assessors or the student may attend the interview remotely via video call. The relevant board is responsible for granting permission for this, and further guidance is available in Annexes D and E. The supervisor may not be present at the interview, but may be present at the student's presentation where this is separate to the interview. Where a department wishes to establish a procedure involving an exception to this requirement, permission must first be sought from the relevant division and Education Committee.

The assessors' report should be returned to the relevant board within three weeks of the date of the assessment interview.

7.1.6 Recording of skills development

The identification of areas of skills training and development is a regular aspect of a student's work with their supervisor(s). As part of the process for application for transfer of status, supervisors are asked to ensure that students:

- record those subject-specific and personal and professional skills which the student has already acquired in the course of PRS status;

- identify any such skills which might require further development or refinement;

- note any other related activities which have made a contribution to the development of the student's work.

This information is then viewed by the transfer assessors and those who approve applications for transfer, not in order to make skills training a formal hurdle within the transfer process, but as a means of acknowledging the importance of such activities in a research student's training and to provide a fuller picture of a student's progress. It also aims to help students cope with the increasing expectation on the part of research councils and other funding bodies that, in conjunction with their supervisor(s), they will maintain a record of such skills and achievements throughout the course of their career as a research student.

Students should have completed the University's research integrity training before applying for transfer of status, and are asked to confirm that they have done so as part of the

application process. In the event that this is not completed before transfer, the training **must**[3] be completed before submitting an application for confirmation of status.

7.1.7   Unsuccessful transfer applications

A student whose first application for transfer is not approved (including where the outcome is a recommendation to transfer to the M.Sc. or M.Litt.) is permitted to make one further application, and should be granted an extension of one term if necessary. After a second unsuccessful attempt, if transfer to the relevant lower degree (having been considered by the assessors) has not been recommended, the student should be removed from the Register of Graduate Students. Particular attention should be paid in such circumstances to the importance of informal counselling, involving the student's college, as an integral part of any procedures.

Information on the procedure for complaints and appeals may be found in section 7.5.

7.2   Confirmation of Status

The confirmation of status process enables the student to have an assessment of their work by one or more assessors, other than the supervisor(s). If confirmation of status is approved, this is an indication that, if work on the thesis continues to develop satisfactorily, submission within the course of three further terms might reasonably be expected. It should be noted that a successful completion of confirmation of status provides an indicator only for readiness for submission, not for the final outcome of the examination of the thesis.

The procedures involved in assessment for confirmation of status provide students with important practice in presenting and defending their research and gives some experience of the viva to come. **The process of assessment must always include an interview with the student.**

The assessment for confirmation of status is a formal requirement, and success should not be considered a foregone conclusion by either the candidate or the assessors.

As set out in section 4.4.5 of this document, supervisors have a responsibility to provide the student with regular information as to the student's progress, to provide guidance and assistance, and to flag concerns about the student's academic progress via Graduate Supervision Reporting (GSR) if necessary.

Where supervisors have concerns regarding a student's progress prior to the confirmation of status examination, or following an unsuccessful first attempt, it is particularly important that these concerns are made clear to the student and recorded in writing, and that the student is provided with guidance in writing on all the options open to them. This could include flagging concerns via GSR; recording concerns in the GSO.14 application to confirm status form; and sending a brief note by e-mail after any relevant verbal discussion of concerns and guidance on options. While students are expected to take ultimate responsibility for their research programme (as set out in section 5.1 of this document), it is important that they are able to make decisions based on knowledge of supervisor concerns and of the options available.

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[3] For students who are admitted to DPhil status (whether having passed Transfer of Status or been admitted direct following progression from an MPhil) from Michaelmas term 2021 onwards this is mandatory. It is also strongly recommended for students who were admitted to DPhil status before that date.

Supervisors should note that expressing concerns regarding a student's readiness to confirm status does not stop the student from applying for confirmation; the GSO.14 form allows the supervisor to state whether they have serious concerns, mild concerns or no concerns regarding the student's readiness to apply for confirmation. If they have any concerns, these should have been discussed with the student beforehand, but the student may still choose to apply if they have reached the relevant time limit for doing so.

7.2.1 Guidance for students and assessors

The general regulations for confirmation of status are set out in the Examination Regulations, along with information in the Special Regulations for particular subjects. Course handbooks must also provide information on the process. The relevant Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) and/or the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) should ensure that the confirmation procedure in a subject includes:

- criteria against which applications for confirmation of doctoral status will be assessed;

- clear instructions about the materials required for the confirmation of status application;

- clear instructions to the student as to the nature of the required assessment process and the role of the assessors;

- clear instructions to assessors as to the nature of the required assessment process and of the assessment report;

- a review of the assessment report by the GSC and/or the DGS;

- (for non-native English speakers) an indication of the assessors' view of the student's ability to present and defend the work in English;

- appropriate feedback to the applicant, especially where an application has been unsuccessful, normally in the form of the assessors' report;

- the University procedure for appeals;

- the timeframe for the return of assessment reports to the department (as a guide, three weeks after the assessment is considered a reasonable maximum).

7.2.2 Timing of confirmation of status

Students must have their status confirmed within nine terms of their admission as a PRS (eighteen terms for part-time students). It is possible for the responsible board to stipulate variations within these limits. Exceptions, where they apply, are set out in Special Regulations.

Students may be permitted by the relevant faculty/department or divisional board to defer their application for confirmation of status for a maximum of three terms. Applications for deferral should be made using form GSO.14b.

Requests for any further terms of deferral must be addressed to Education Committee, indicating whether or not the relevant faculty/department or divisional board supports the application.

When a responsible body declines a request for deferral (where a student has not already been granted the maximum number of terms of deferral, and therefore the request cannot be considered by Education Committee), the student should be directed to the University Student Complaints Procedure, in order to make a complaint to the responsible body if they are dissatisfied with the decision.

The confirmation of status process enables the student to have an assessment of their work by one or more assessors, other than the supervisor(s). For this to be of benefit, sufficient time should be allowed for assimilation of the experience and feedback from confirmation before submission takes place. For this reason, there should be a gap between completion of confirmation of status and submission, normally of not less than three months.

7.2.3   Application for confirmation

To apply for confirmation of D.Phil. status, students must submit a completed GSO.14 form, available from the Graduate Progression Forms page (students should select the correct version of the form for their division). Students of some subjects will also need to submit an additional subject-specific form, also available from this page.

7.2.4   The assessors and the assessment process

The appointment of the assessor is formally the responsibility of the relevant board, but the supervisor may make recommendations where appropriate.

Responsible bodies should bear the following points in mind when appointing assessors, with a particular eye to potential difficulties:

- The need to take particular care in the choice of assessors, taking account of any views made known by the student and the supervisor(s);

- The importance of ensuring that the assessors structure the assessment interview to give the student maximum opportunity to demonstrate the standard of their work and to answer any reservations the assessors may have, make a careful record of the assessment interview, and report in some detail;

- The consideration of use of one or more external assessors in addition to an internal assessor where expertise is not available internally;

- The assessors should be sufficiently distant from the candidate and supervisor, both academically and personally, to ensure an impartial and objective opinion of the submitted work. It is accepted, however, that in small departments/faculties there will inevitably have been some prior academic interaction between the assessor and candidate, if an external assessor is not used;

- The supervisor should not be appointed as an assessor;

- Anyone who has had substantial co-authoring or collaborative involvement in the candidate's work should not be appointed as an assessor;

- Anyone having a close personal relationship with the candidate or supervisor should not be appointed as an assessor.

It is permissible for an assessor for confirmation of status to be subsequently appointed as an internal examiner of the thesis.

Given that the special regulations setting out the requirements for confirmation of status may vary according to the subject, it is important to note that the process of assessment must always include an interview with the student. In exceptional circumstances, one or more of the assessors or the student may attend the interview remotely via video call. The relevant board is responsible for granting permission for this, and further guidance is available in Annexes D and E. The supervisor may not be present at the interview, but may be present at the student's presentation where this is separate to the interview. Where a department wishes to establish a procedure involving an exception to this requirement, permission must first be sought from the relevant division and Education Committee.

The assessors' report should be returned to the relevant board within three weeks of the date of the assessment interview.

7.2.5   *Unsuccessful confirmation applications and appeals*

A student whose first application for confirmation of their status is not approved is permitted to make one further application, and shall be granted an extension of one term if this is necessary for the purposes of making the application. After a second unsuccessful attempt, if transfer to the relevant lower degree (having been considered by the assessors) has not been recommended, the student should be removed from the Register of Graduate Students. Particular attention should be paid in such circumstances to the importance of informal counselling, involving the student's college, as an integral part of any procedures.

Information on the procedure for complaints and appeals may be found in section 7.5.

7.3   **Examination of Research Degrees**

Rules relating to the examination of research degrees are set out in the relevant general regulations of the Examination Regulations, along with information contained on the relevant application forms (see form GSO.20a).

Regulations governing the content and length of theses may be found in the General Regulations and in the relevant Special Regulations. Guidance notes for divisional boards to assist in the development of Special Regulations for integrated format theses may be found at Annex B.

7.3.1   *Preparation for submission*

Students must allow adequate time for writing up the thesis, taking the advice of the supervisor. Particular attention should be paid to final proof-reading. Students should also be made aware that they must ensure that the standard of their English is sufficient for the presentation of a thesis.

Students and supervisors should be aware that it is the student's responsibility to decide whether to submit the thesis for examination, after taking due account of the supervisor's

opinion. It is in the student's interests to ensure that the final version has been made available to the supervisor for final comment in good time before the intended date of submission.

Students and supervisors should also be aware that no changes to a research degree thesis can be made once leave to supplicate has been granted. It is a student's responsibility to ensure that they have checked their thesis and are fully satisfied with its contents before submitting it for examination, including having proof-read it carefully and checked sections such as the abstract and acknowledgements. They should not assume that there will be any further opportunity to make changes, as it is possible to be granted leave to supplicate without the examiners requesting any corrections.

All research degree theses must be submitted online via the Research Thesis Digital Submission (RTDS) application, and not in hard copy. Examiners may request hard copies of the thesis via the Submissions and Research Degrees Team. Further information is available from the Research Examinations website.

Students should be made aware that the examination process at Oxford is strictly separate from the supervision of research, and that while a supervisor may offer advice on the student's chance of success, the outcome will depend on the recommendation of the examiners and on the final judgement of the board, and this may reflect a different evaluation of the merits of the thesis.

7.3.2   Approval and appointment of examiners

Applications for the appointment of examiners are made by a student using the standard form (GSO.3), and may not be made earlier than the term before that in which the thesis is to be submitted. A document setting out the procedure to be followed and the examination process (GSO.20a) is also available.

In completing the relevant section of the form, a supervisor is required to consult with the student concerning possible examiners, and to forward to the department, divisional or faculty board the names of suggested examiners together with any details of any special considerations from the student about potential examiners. Students are advised that this does not give them a veto over the appointment of examiners since the final choice lies with the responsible board or committee.

A board or committee that decides against all the examiners proposed by the supervisor, in consultation with the student, should consult the supervisor and student before approving alternative names.

7.3.3   Examiners

External examiners

It is an absolute requirement that one examiner should be external to the University for research examinations. The absence of specific reference to external and internal examiners in the Examination Regulations allows the responsible board to appoint two external examiners where particular circumstances suggest that this would be prudent. It is not possible to appoint more than two examiners in total.

Where two external examiners are appointed, it is best practice to appoint a member of the department/faculty to act as a point of liaison and information for the examination. This member should be an academic, so that they can guide the external examiners through University research examination processes as well as undertaking some of the routine tasks (posting notices of the examination, booking a room, finding hospitality) which would normally be undertaken by the internal examiner.

Overseas examiners

The University's policy in relation to examiners from overseas is intended to ensure that students should, as far as possible, be examined by those well qualified to do so. The University has not therefore put a formal restriction on invitations to examiners from overseas. Boards are asked to consider examiners from within the UK and Europe as a first choice, and only to look further afield if there is no one appropriately qualified from within this group, and if the quality of the student's examination would be reduced without an examiner from elsewhere. Boards or committees are asked in these circumstances to try to fit the viva around a pre-arranged visit to the UK by the proposed external examiner or to consider granting permission for the examiner to attend remotely via video call (see section 7.3.4 below and Annexes D and E).

Other requirements

Examiners act on behalf of the body which appoints them, and there is no restriction on who may act as an examiner if they are considered suitable by a board/committee, bearing in mind conflicts of interest (see below). It is not necessary to hold a permanent post to act as an internal examiner, but it is important that the internal examiner should have expertise in the subject of the student's thesis, should understand the procedures which operate in Oxford, and have a clear sense of the expectations and standards associated with a successful Oxford doctoral thesis.

Conflicts of interest

External examiners

No one in the following categories or circumstances should be appointed as an external examiner:

1. A member of a governing body or committee of the University or a current employee of the University;

2. *Anyone with a contractual or personal relationship with either the student or their supervisor(s) or who has a financial interest in the research of the student: personal is taken here to mean a social and/or family connection;

3. Anyone who is already, or knows they will be, in a position significantly to influence the future of a student: e.g. a person who is on the appointment panel for a post for which the student has applied;

4. Anyone significantly involved in recent or current substantive collaborative research activities with the student;

5. Former staff or students of the University, unless a period of three years has elapsed.

*Relationships in this category will be on a spectrum such that appointing bodies may exercise an element of discretion and consider carefully whether the relationship presents a potential risk of perceived or actual bias.

Departments and faculties should also give careful consideration to whether the same external examiner should be appointed for successive students of the same supervisor.

Internal examiners

An internal examiner should be sufficiently distant from the candidate and supervisor, both academically and personally, to ensure an impartial and objective opinion of the thesis. It is accepted, however, that in small departments/faculties there will inevitably have been some prior academic interaction between the examiner and candidate.

- The supervisor should not be appointed as an internal examiner. However, it is permissible for a Transfer or Confirmation assessor to be appointed as an internal examiner;

- Anyone who has had substantial co-authoring or collaborative involvement in the candidate's thesis should not be appointed as an internal examiner;

- Anyone having a close personal relationship with the candidate or supervisor should not be appointed as an internal examiner.

7.3.4   Remote vivas

In exceptional circumstances, the relevant board has the power to grant permission for any or all of the candidate and examiners to attend the viva remotely via video call. External examiners are most likely to request remote attendance, but it is also possible for internal examiners and the student to attend remotely. All examiners and the student must agree in writing to remote attendance by any party at the viva. Further guidance is available in Annexes D and E.

7.3.5   Timeframe for the appointment process

While the University places considerable importance on avoiding unnecessary delays in the examination of research degrees, it has to follow procedures that are designed to preserve the consistency and fairness of the examination process. In particular the procedures are designed:

- to minimise any direct contact between the student and the proposed examiners prior to the viva (i.e. by passing the thesis and associated paperwork through the Submissions and Research Degrees Team within Student Registry);

- to ensure that the names of proposed examiners are scrutinised and approved by or on behalf of the relevant responsible body;

- to recognise that examiners enter into a contract to act on behalf of the University in the examination process, and must therefore be invited formally to act and must also formally accept the invitation.

Graduate Studies Committees (GSC) and/or Directors of Graduate Studies (DGS) are likely to be involved in the approval of examiners for research degrees. This is a stage at which

delays can occur, and, if the approved examiners decline to act, where these can be lengthy. It is important that GSC and/or DGS are aware of the procedures, and can intercede on the question of the time-scale for the examination with the new appointees. Such examiners may not understand the importance of working to progress matters as quickly as possible.

If, for any reason, examiners wish to hold a viva fewer than four weeks after the thesis has been made available to them via the Research Thesis Digital Submission (RTDS) application or the Submissions and Research Degrees Team, the relevant board has the power to grant permission for this. All examiners and the student will need to agree in writing to the proposed date. Further guidance is available in Annex D.

7.3.6   Information about the examination process

The [Submissions and Research Degrees team](#) will provide examiners with a copy of the Memorandum of Guidance for Examiners ([GSO.5](#)). Information about the examination process is given to students in the document which accompanies the appointment of examiners form ([GSO.20a](#)). In addition, the relevant GSC and/or the DGS should ensure that the examination procedure in a subject includes guidance on the criteria against which the thesis will be examined (qualification descriptors are available from the [QAA website](#)).

7.3.7   Examination outcomes

Master of Letters and Master of Science by Research

Examiners for the M.Litt. or M.Sc. must choose one of the following outcome recommendations:

1. Award of the M.Litt/ M.Sc. [possibly with minor corrections]

2. Reference back [for revision] for M.Litt./ M.Sc.

3. Outright failure

For a first M.Litt./ M.Sc. examination, examiners may only select from recommendations 1 or 2; for a subsequent examination, examiners may select any one of 1-3. Full explanation of these recommendations is available in the relevant Memorandum of Guidance for Examiners ([GSO.7 and GSO.7a](#)).

Doctor of Philosophy

Examiners for the D.Phil. must choose one of the following outcome recommendations:

1. Award of the D.Phil. [possibly with minor or major corrections]

2. Reference back [for revision] for D.Phil. or award of the M.Litt./ M.Sc. (as the thesis stands or subject to minor corrections) *as the student may choose*

3. Reference back [for revision] for M.Litt./ M.Sc. only

4. Reference back [for revision] for D.Phil. or [for revision] for the degree of M.Litt./ M.Sc. *as the student may choose*

5. Award of M.Litt./ M.Sc. (possibly with minor corrections)

6. Outright failure

For a first D.Phil. examination, examiners may only select from recommendations 1, 2 or 4; for a subsequent examination, examiners may select any one of 1-6. Full explanation of these recommendations is available in Section 6 of the Memorandum of Guidance for Examiners (GSO.5).

The examiners should return their joint report to the relevant Graduate Studies Assistant no later than one month after the date of receipt of the corrected thesis by the designated examiner in cases where minor corrections have been requested, and ideally within two weeks of the date of the viva if no corrections are required.

The University's procedures are designed to ensure that the formal outcome of the examination is not made known until the recommendation from the examiners has been considered and accepted by or on behalf of the responsible body, while recognising that by asking for minor or major corrections to be completed, examiners will inevitably provide the student with an informal indication of their likely recommendation.

If a student is unable to complete their minor or major corrections, or to revise the thesis following reference back, within the time allowed plus any extension granted by the relevant body (the time allowed and extensions permitted are set out in the relevant Examination Regulations for the D.Phil, M.Litt. and M.Sc.), then their enrolment will be withdrawn.

Candidates in this situation may subsequently apply for reinstatement to the graduate register. The application should have the support of their supervisor and college; the thesis should have been submitted incorporating the required corrections/revisions (along with a separate report indicating the changes, in the case of major corrections or reference back); and any reinstatement fee should have been paid.

The relevant body may grant permission for reinstatement provided that:

- in the case of **minor corrections**, no more than **six months** have passed since the candidate was notified of the outcome of their examination;

- in the case of **major corrections**, no more than **twelve months** have passed since the candidate was notified of the outcome of their examination;

- in the case of **reference back**, no more than **twenty-four months** have passed since the candidate was notified of the outcome of their examination.

If a candidate is unable to apply within the above timeframes, an application for exceptional reinstatement must be made to Education Committee. Applications should only be passed on to Education Committee after scrutiny by and with the endorsement of the relevant body. Students must meet the requirements for reinstatement by the relevant body, and in addition provide a statement explaining why it is reasonable for Education Committee to permit their reinstatement and outlining the circumstances that have prevented earlier submission. Education Committee will take into account the length of time since the student's enrolment was withdrawn; the reasons for the delay; and the views of the relevant body, supervisor and college.

Education Committee will not normally consider such applications for reinstatement if **sixty months** or more have passed since the candidate was notified of the outcome of their examination.

7.3.8   Enquiries before and after the viva

Where examiners have enquiries about a proposed examination (beyond those of a routine nature that can be dealt with by the Submissions and Research Degrees team), these should be directed to the DGS (and not to the supervisor).

A student who wishes to enquire about the outcome of an examination before the examiners' report has been considered by or on behalf of the responsible body should be directed to the DGS (with the explicit proviso that the DGS may decide to divulge nothing until the report has been formally considered by that body).

Where clarification is required from the examiners of any aspect of their report or recommendations, this may be sought on behalf of the relevant body by its chair or vice-chair or by the DGS.

The University attaches importance to supervisors (and students) not being involved in discussions about the validity of the examiners' recommendations before these have been discussed by or on behalf of the responsible body, and officially released. Once officially released, a copy of the report will be sent to the student.

7.4   Adjustments for disability

In accordance with the provisions of the Examination Regulations, students with disabilities may apply for adjustments to be made to their transfer and confirmation assessments and final viva arrangements using form GSO.19. Adjustments can be requested at any point from offer of a place to submission; at the point of applying for transfer, at the point of applying for confirmation or at the point of applying for final viva/appointment of examiners. The relevant Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), using guidance issued by the Proctors, will determine whether the requested adjustment is one that they can approve, or one that must be approved by the Proctors. The relevant department is then responsible for making the necessary arrangements once approved. The Proctors' guidance to DGSs may be found at Annex C.

7.5   Complaints and appeals

If a student wishes to contest the outcome of a transfer or confirmation assessment, either on procedural or academic grounds, they should first discuss the matter with their DGS, following the department or faculty's complaints and appeals procedure. If the student feels that a concern has not been satisfactorily settled by that means, then the student, the supervisor, or the college authority may put the appeal directly to the Proctors. The Proctors can only consider whether the procedures for reaching an academic decision were properly followed, and cannot challenge the academic judgement of the assessors.

All complaints relating to the outcome of an examination for a research degree should normally be directed to the Proctors, according to the University Academic Appeals Procedure.

7.6   Degree ceremonies

All successful D.Phil, M.Sc., and M.Litt. students are required, on the granting of leave to supplicate, to submit an electronic version of their finalised thesis to the [Oxford Research Archive](.).

Students are no longer required to submit a hardbound copy of their thesis to the Bodleian Libraries, with the exception of students who have been granted permanent dispensation from consultation of their entire thesis, who should, in addition to the finalised copy of the thesis submitted to the Oxford Research Archive, submit a finalised hardbound copy of their thesis for deposit in the relevant university library. Students whose thesis (or part of the thesis) is in a non-standard format which cannot be submitted electronically (e.g. a 3D artwork, or artefact) should also submit a physical copy for deposit.

Students who do not fulfil these requirements will not be permitted to have their degree conferred.

Annex A: Graduate induction in departments: examples of good practice

[This guidance covers induction for both postgraduate research and postgraduate taught students]

1.   Department facilities

Topics covered might include: building layout, access to buildings, fire alarm and evacuation procedures, catering facilities, areas and facilities available to student use etc.

2.   Health and safety (where relevant)

Topics covered might include: laboratory safety, risk assessments, control of substances hazardous to health, chemical safety, emergency first aid.

3.   Introduction to staff and their roles

Policy requires departments to provide the following information for students:

•   An introduction to, and explanation of the role of

o   The DGS and anyone who supports them

o   The course director/organizer/convenor (in the case of PGT students)

o   Other academic staff involved in the course

•   An overview of supervision arrangements, and the role of the supervisor (in the case of PGR students)

•   An explanation of who to go to with a concern or a complaint.

The induction programme for new graduate students in the Department of Politics and International Relations includes a session introducing the Head of Department, Deputy Head, Director of Graduate Studies, Course Directors, Director of Research Training, Divisional Training Coordinator, Graduate Studies Administrator, Graduate Research Administrator, and Courses Manager.

4.   Orientation to programme

For PGT students this might comprise:

•   Components of the programme, core and options, and the curriculum plan;

•   Teaching types (lectures, seminars, small-group teaching, lab-work etc.);

•   The weekly teaching timetable;

•   Components of assessment;

•   Assessment timetable;

•   Handbook and online information: orientation.

> *The School of Interdisciplinary Area Studies includes in its induction programme for its MSc students a session on getting to know the course handbook, in addition to an introductory session on the MSc programme.*

> *The Department of Education includes on its website a page describing a typical week for an MSc student, which gives new and prospective students an idea of how an MSc student's time might be occupied during the week.*

For PGR students this might comprise:

• Key milestones and terms permitted to reach completion (transfer and confirmation of status, submission of the thesis deadlines);

• Starting work with the supervisor;

• Pattern of independent work;

• Expected attendance (e.g. lab hours where relevant, compulsory seminars or meetings);

• Handbook and online information: orientation.

> *The Department of Materials provides its new DPhil students with a 'DPhil Diary' which outlines the schedule for the entire DPhil programme by week and term. As well as listing the timings of the milestones, the Diary also gives the approximate timings of various workshops, courses and seminars for the programme.*

5.   Departmental IT and Library

An introduction to departmental IT might include:

• IT policies;

• Departmental support and help;

• University IT Services.

> *The Mathematical Institute provides an IT induction booklet for new students which covers: privacy and information security; facilities access (accounts); departmental network; passwords; data storage; email; web; support and help; personal machines; mailing lists; safety.*

Topics covered in library induction might include:

• An overview of the departmental library;

• A library tour;

- An introduction to finding sources in the library.

The Bodleian Libraries provide [Getting started guides](#) covering what students need to know if they are new to the Bodleian Libraries or need a refresher.

6.   Preparation for Week 1 work

It is important that all students know what they are expected to do in the first week of their course. PGT students should be guided as to what preparatory reading or work they should undertake for their teaching sessions in their first week.

It is not always the case that supervisors are immediately available to meet their supervisees (though they are obliged to meet with their student no later than the end of Week 2) and departments should advise research students how they might profitably spend their time if this is the case.

7.   Academic expectations and academic skills support

An introduction to the standard expected, the kind of skills that students will need to have or acquire, and how support and guidance is provided by the department, is amongst the most valuable information that can be offered to new students.

Skill level

Many students will be anxious about the level of attainment expected of them. One approach to addressing this is to use the experience of current or recent students who can give an insight into their experiences of adjusting to the level of work required. Examples of previous dissertations, both PGT and research, might also be useful in illustrating what students should be aiming for. In addition, an experienced member of staff might offer a session on the typical challenges which may face students, and sources of support and guidance in times of difficulty.

The Medical Sciences Division uses this approach in its induction programme for new students with a session on 'A current research student's experience'.

Support with academic skill acquisition

PGT students

Needs will vary according to previous academic background but these are generic skills with which some students might need help early on in their studies:

- Time management (online resource at http://youtu.be/gtt9sX4WTYY);

- Participating in tutorials/ seminars/ supervision;

- Critical thinking and reasoning;

- Academic writing;

- Group and self-study strategies;

- Revision and examination techniques.

Using PGR teaching, some departments also give introductory sessions on research to both their taught Master's and PGR students.

New students on the MSc Mathematical Modelling and Scientific Computing are required to attend 'Additional Skills' sessions throughout their first term, which cover topics such as the use of mathematical software and the web, sources of numerical software, literature searches, communication and career development.

PGR students

Although the supervisor is responsible for supporting their supervisee, the department can (and in many cases does) offer a programme for the PRS or research student cohort. This has the advantage of bringing the cohort together: peer support is particularly beneficial in research studies.

Some of the MPLS DTCs (Systems Approaches to Biomedical Science IDC/ Systems Biology DTC/ Life Sciences Interface DTC) provide a programme for the PRS/research student cohort, comprising:

- *What is research? (induction programme)*

- *Presentation skills (induction programme)*

- *Managing your supervisor (second year)*

- *Planning to write a DPhil (third year)*

- *Interview techniques (third year)*

- *Completing your DPhil (fourth year)*

- *Non-academic careers (fourth year).*

8.   Academic good practice (research ethics, avoiding plagiarism)

Departmental induction sessions should – in Education Committee's view – always incorporate separate sessions on good academic practice and the avoidance of plagiarism. These should include advice on note-taking, referencing practice and study skills. Ideally, further sessions on plagiarism and academic practice should be organised as students prepare to undertake projects and dissertations. Education Committee material for students is found on the Student Gateway.

Whilst supervisors should work through the [research integrity checklist](#) with their students, departments should ensure that research students and master's students undertaking research projects are aware in general terms of their responsibilities and any restrictions, for example on the ownership and protection of data, or on the protocol for publication, at a time that is relevant for them to understand that information. This may be induction for research students and later in the course for PGT, depending on their programme.

The Centre for Criminology includes the following note in its induction timetable:

Compulsory Plagiarism and Reference Management Seminar

For your dissertation or thesis you will need to cite your sources and organise them in a properly formatted bibliography. This is vital to avoid plagiarism. A well-researched bibliography adds credibility to your work and shows the quality of resources you have used. This session will outline the key referencing styles used in the social sciences and will demonstrate the benefits of using reference management software. Clear advice on how to incorporate the ideas of others without plagiarising their work will assist you in maintaining a high standard of academic integrity.

PLEASE NOTE: A register of attendance will be taken at this compulsory session

Followed by

Introduction to the Social Science Library

An introduction to the Social Science Library, online resources and a library tour

9.   Overview of wider academic opportunities (seminars, research presentations, etc.)

Students should be made aware of other University or college seminars or lectures that are taking place and that they might attend.

The Department of Population Health offers a session on 'Wider academic opportunities' to both its MSc and DPhil students, which covers both teaching opportunities and seminars in the Department.

The graduate induction programme for the Faculty of Classics includes a session which gives an introduction to work-in-progress seminars.

Many departments now advertise talks and seminars open to the wider academic community through [OxTalks](#).

10.   Responsibilities of the research/PGT student

Section 5 of the *Policy and guidance on research degrees* covers the responsibilities of research students. The equivalent policy for PGT students is in Section 6 of the *Policy and Guidance on Postgraduate Taught Courses*.

Departments should draw students' attention to the relevant section.

11.   Skills training (researcher development)

Departments are responsible for ensuring that their research students have access to skills training and this should begin at induction. Students should be made aware of how resources for their development are to be found, including those offered at divisional and institution-wide level as well as within the department. Supervisors of research students are responsible for discussing students' needs with them in their first term of study. Additionally, where there are opportunities for PGT students to participate in generic or transferable skills training, these should be drawn to their attention.

Some departments cover teaching opportunities as part of induction sessions on skills training, even though opportunities to teach do not arise until later in the research programme.

The Department of Computer Science includes in its induction programme for new DPhil students two seminars on teaching and demonstrating. These seminars are compulsory for those students wishing to do class teaching or practical demonstrating, and students not planning to do either are still encouraged to attend the seminar on demonstrating as a part of transferable skill development.

This handbook entry for research programmes in Chemical Biology gives a good introductory overview to available skills training:

You will have the opportunity to attend a variety of skills training sessions offered by the Department, as appropriate to the different stages of your graduate career. The MPLS Division also organises courses and career planning events, details of which are emailed to students via their departments. Information about transferable skills training is provided in the division's WebLearn site http://www.weblearn.ox.ac.uk/site/mathsphys/gradstudents/. Information about divisional training and other courses offered across the University is also available through the Graduate Training site at https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/hierarchy/grad

This site provides information about transferable skills development for research students and research staff at Oxford University, and includes a searchable database of skills training opportunities, links to articles on subjects such as project management, teaching and career planning, and message boards for asking questions and discussing issues with other researchers. An online Personal Development Planning System is also available through the Graduate Training site.

12.   Student representation

Students should be advised of the arrangements for student representation in the department, the duties of student representatives, and the procedure and timing for the election of representatives or the names of representatives if these have already been elected for the year.

> *The course handbook for the MTh Applied Theology includes a section on student representation which outlines the purpose and composition of, and arrangements for election to its Graduate Joint Consultative Committee. The Faculty of Theology and Religion's Graduate Studies website lists the names and email addresses of the current student representatives, and also links to the minutes of GJCC meeting minutes in WebLearn (restricted access).*

Acknowledgements

Education Committee is grateful to colleagues across the collegiate University for providing example induction programmes.

Annex B: Integrated theses: guidance for divisional boards

Guidelines for integrated theses

In the past an Oxford DPhil thesis has been submitted in monograph format, as a series of chapters presented in the style of a book.

It is increasingly common, however, for theses to include published papers, or papers written intended for future publication, within the main body of the text; this type of work is known as an 'integrated thesis'. An integrated thesis may either be a hybrid of conventional chapters and papers, or be fully article-based. Regardless of the format, the content of the thesis should reflect the amount, originality and level of work expected for a conventional thesis.

Where a divisional board wishes to permit submission of an integrated thesis, this must be governed by Special Regulations.

Format of an integrated thesis

To ensure the format of the thesis constitutes a thematically coherent whole, an integrated thesis must include an introduction, a literature survey, and a conclusion. There should also be clarity about how the chapters are integrated as a complete text.

Any included papers should relate directly to the candidate's approved field of study, and should have been written whilst holding the status of PRS or a student for the MSc (by Research), MLitt or DPhil.

Number of papers

As noted above, an integrated thesis will include a minimum of one or more papers which have been written for publication, submitted for publication and/or published. Special regulations may specify a required minimum (or maximum) number of papers written for publication, submitted for publication or published. Care should be taken when considering whether or not to specify any minimum, however, as if the student cannot meet this requirement, they would need to revert to a conventional style thesis and they would not be permitted to include any papers in the main body of the thesis (although these could be included as an appendix).

Permission to submit an integrated thesis

The special regulations should specify the stage by which a student must apply to submit an integrated thesis; for example, this might be during Transfer or Confirmation of Status[4]. The special regulations should also define the process for a student to apply to revert to a conventional thesis. Where integrated theses are permitted, boards should also consider whether the requirements for milestone assessments need to be amended.

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[4] The timing for permission might also vary where boards admit students direct to DPhil status having completed an MPhil at Oxford, and the DPhil thesis is in the same subject area.

Joint authorship

When submitting a conventional thesis, students are required to confirm that the thesis is wholly their own work, or to acknowledge any parts of the thesis which are not their own work.

For an integrated thesis where candidates may wish to include papers written in collaboration, which is more common in some subject areas, boards should consider the extent to which this may be permitted. It would normally be considered that papers written in collaboration should not be included unless the greater part of the work is directly attributed to the candidate themselves, and the supervisor so certifies. Should a board permit papers with multiple authorship to be included, it must be made clear within special regulations the level of contribution required by the student. It is important that the extent of the student's contribution to the collaborative work is clear and all co-authors should certify in writing to the responsible body what part of the work represents that of the candidate. Additionally, the student must be able to defend all papers written in collaboration in their entirety. If the responsible body is not satisfied that the greater part of the work included in the thesis is the student's own, it should not proceed to appoint examiners. If relevant it may be acceptable to include in an appendix paper(s) written in collaboration where the greater part has not been undertaken by the candidate, but the paper(s) should not contribute to any specified minimum or maximum number of papers required.

Presentation

When writing an integrated thesis, candidate should ensure that the papers are incorporated in accordance with the [General Regulations governing Research Degrees](#) (§7.2, Preparation and submission of theses for the Degrees of M.Litt., M.Sc. by Research, and D.Phil.). Special regulations might specify that the published version of any papers should also be included as an appendix to the thesis (i.e. the typeset version prepared by the journal) in addition to either the verbatim copy or the more substantive working of the paper within the main body of the thesis. This would be subject to resolution of any issues of copyright (if necessary, the student might need to apply for dispensation from consultation of the relevant appendix of the hard copy/electronic copy of the thesis).

Assessment

Candidates should be made aware that the inclusion of one or more papers which have been accepted for publication or published, does not in itself constitute proof that the work is of sufficient quality or significance to merit the award of the degree concerned. This remains a judgement of the relevant board on the recommendation of its examiners.

Boards should also ensure that guidance is provided to examiners to assist with the examining of theses of this type. This should include direction as to the types of corrections an examiner may recommend, particularly in relation to included papers that have been submitted for publication or published. Boards should also ensure that consideration is given to potential conflicts of interest whereby an appointed examiner may have reviewed the papers submitted within the thesis prior to their publication.

Regulations

Departments and faculties wishing to introduce special regulations to permit the submission of an integrated thesis should seek approval from the relevant divisional board.

Special regulations should include information on the structure of the integrated thesis, ensuring that candidates are aware that the thesis needs to form a coherent whole with any papers embedded within the text; whether there is any variance from the normal word limits for the thesis; whether there is a minimum or maximum number of papers required (and whether there are any prerequisites e.g. whether submitted for publication or published); any requirements regarding co-authorship and collaborative arrangements; and the procedures for seeking approval to submit an integrated thesis.

Annex C: Adjustments for disability: guidance for Directors of Graduate Studies

Students with disabilities may apply for adjustments to be made to their transfer and confirmation assessments and final viva arrangements using the GSO.19 form. Form GSO.19c gives information on the application process for students and staff. All of the adjustments outlined below may be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), except where it is indicated that the approval of the Proctors is required.

This guidance is given in three parts:

- general adjustments that will remove barriers for all disabled candidates: it is recommended that over time departments seek to embed these arrangements routinely as inclusive practice that will eliminate the need for special requests;

- individual adjustments appropriate to all disabled candidates;

- additional individual adjustments appropriate for particular disabilities.

While these adjustments will address the needs of most disabled candidates, please note that they are not exhaustive and it might be that different adjustments are necessary.

General adjustments that will remove barriers for all disabled candidates

It is assumed that all candidates will have had ample opportunity to discuss the nature of the examination with their supervisor prior to the assessment. The following practical arrangements will help remove barriers for disabled candidates, and if embedded in routine practice will eliminate the need for disabled candidates to specially request them:

- ensure the examination takes place in an accessible building with level access via lifts/ramps, automatic doors, with accessible toilet facilities nearby, and that the sensory impact of the room is minimal (in terms of hearing, lighting, and noise distractions);

- ensure clear timetable information and written Viva Voce instructions are provided in a timely way to allow candidates sufficient time to prepare;

- give advance notification of and access to the venue so the candidate can familiarise themselves with the route and the environment;

- provide all written information in an accessible format;

- clearly explain the procedure and method of the examination at the start of the viva;

- allow the candidate to take in written notes and a copy of their thesis, and to jot down notes and refer back to these as necessary;

- provide flipcharts and other materials to enable a candidate to explain ideas in writing or diagrams where beneficial;

- present one question at a time (avoiding multi-faceted questions), and be prepared to re-phase questions if the candidate appears to have misunderstood;

- allow the candidate brief pauses to compose answers;

- allow adequate time to read and absorb any new material that is introduced during the assessment;

- monitor fatigue and provide reasonable breaks (e.g. at a minimum every 2 hours) as required;

- provide a clear written summary of any formal feedback, corrections, and action points as part of the examiners' report.

Individual adjustments appropriate to all disabled candidates

- avoid timetable changes (including venue) as much as possible; if unavoidable, provide notice as far in advance as possible;

- allow extra time (beyond that needed by others) to read/absorb any new material, collect thoughts/compose answers, or locate details in a specific section of the thesis, and reassure the candidate that this is acceptable;

- schedule more frequent and/or extended rest breaks than typically required;

- structure questions into shorter sections, repeating and rephrasing if necessary, and allowing intermediate responses;

- write questions down if requested;

- allow the use of a digital recorder for the part of the viva where corrections are discussed;

- consider whether a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) is required and undertake this in advance where necessary.

Additional individual adjustments appropriate for particular disabilities

Candidates with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)/Asperger Syndrome:

- provide an opportunity to meet the examiners beforehand (possibly by Microsoft Teams or similar) if there are anxieties about meeting new people; it should be made clear this is not part of the examination and the conversation would not address academic matters but be limited to an introduction to personnel and the likely conduct of the viva;

- allow the supervisor to provide a more detailed explanation of the process and structure of a viva in advance, particularly in terms of any social conventions (the candidate may find it helpful to rehearse greetings, requests for clarification of a question, etc.);

- give permission for an appropriate person to attend in a supportive capacity; it should be made clear that this person is not permitted to participate in the viva by, for example, interpreting the examiners' questions for the candidate;

- direct examiners to avoid the use of metaphorical language, to be prepared to re-phrase/ask questions in more explicit concrete terms if the candidate is having difficulty interpreting what is being asked or expressing their knowledge clearly, and encourage them to redirect/prompt the candidate if they stray off topic or have difficulty judging how much information is required;

- ensure examiners are aware of the potential for unusual behaviour/social communication and greater anxiety than might typically be expected (suggest short breaks if necessary).

Candidates with a visual impairment:

- permitting the use of assistive technology for reading, writing and notetaking;

- provide written information in an accessible format (check in advance what the candidate requires);

- the candidate may require a sighted guide or a registered assistance dog; it should be made clear that the guide is not permitted to participate in the viva by, for example, interpreting the examiners' questions for the candidate.

Candidates with chronic medical conditions and unseen disabilities:

- ensure consideration is given to scheduling (e.g. morning or afternoon start) due to the potential for symptoms/side-effects of medication to be worse at a particular time of day;

- ensure allowance is made for the candidate to bring any food, drink, medication or equipment into the examination which helps them to manage their condition;

- split the viva over more than one day to accommodate the impact of fatigue.
  N.B. This would require the permission of the Proctors.

Candidates with a hearing impairment:

- ensure examiners follow appropriate [communication guidelines for students with hearing impairments](#);

- facilitate the candidate's use of communication aids – this could include hearing support systems compatible with hearing aids (infra-red/loop systems installed in the room, or portable individual technology) or British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters;

- ensure any relevant departmental equipment is available/fully operational in advance;

- if required, ensure examiners wear/use a microphone.

Candidates with mental health difficulties:

- awareness of the potential for more severe anxiety than would typically be expected; adopt a calm, understanding approach, and suggest short breaks if necessary;

- ensure consideration is given to scheduling due to the potential for symptoms/side-effects of medication to be worse at a particular time of day;

- give permission for an appropriate person to attend in a supportive capacity; it should be made clear that this person is not permitted to participate in the viva by, for example, interpreting the examiners' questions for the candidate.

Candidates with physical disabilities and mobility impairments:

- give permission to stand/move around as required;

- provide any necessary ergonomic furniture;

- give permission for a personal carer/study support assistant to attend; it should be made clear that this person is not permitted to participate in the viva by, for example, interpreting the examiners' questions for the candidate;

- schedule frequent and/or extended rest breaks.

Candidates with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs):

- redirect/prompt the candidate if they stray off topic;

- be prepared to re-phrase/ask questions in more explicit concrete terms if the candidate is having difficulty interpreting what is being asked or expressing their knowledge clearly.

Annex D: Special permissions relating to vivas and milestone interviews: Guidance for Directors of Graduate Studies

Introduction

1.   This annex provides guidance on a number of matters relating to postgraduate research (PGR) vivas/milestone interviews for which decisions are the responsibility of the relevant board. The guidance is mainly intended for Directors of Graduate Studies, who in most cases will be responsible for taking decisions on behalf of the relevant board. It will also be useful for PGR examiners/milestone assessors, and for administrators involved in PGR student examinations. PGR examiners should as always also refer to GSO.5 Memorandum of guidance for DPhil examiners (or the equivalent documents for other research degrees)[5].

2.   Arrangements for PGR examinations are usually agreed between examiners/assessors and students without any issues arising, and before approaching the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) for the relevant permissions. If any problems do arise, in most cases the DGS will be able to resolve these via conversations with the relevant parties, seeking advice from divisional offices as necessary. Divisional officers may also seek advice from the Proctors' Office or from Education Policy Support.

Vivas and milestone interviews taking place via remote attendance

3.   The relevant board has the power to grant permission for any or all of the candidate and examiners/milestone assessors to attend a viva, or Transfer of Status/Confirmation of Status interview, remotely via video call, without application being made to the Proctors[6]. The board also approves the specific arrangements for a remote viva. Applications should be made to the relevant board (usually via the Director of Graduate Studies), providing the following information:

- the reasons for the request and why attendance in person is not possible;
- assurance that the person making the request will have access to suitable space, equipment, internet connection and software in order to facilitate a remote viva.

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[5] Available on the Graduate Forms webpage

[6] The relevant regulations are:

1. In relation to vivas: General Regulations Governing Research Degrees, §7. Regulations concerning the Examination of Graduate Research Students, 3. Conduct of Oral Examinations for the Degrees of M.Litt., M.Sc. by Research, and D.Phil, ix

2. In relation to DPhil Transfer of Status interviews: General Regulations for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, §3. Admission of Candidates to the Status of Student for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, 9

3. In relation to DPhil Confirmation of Status interviews: General Regulations for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, §4. Confirmation of Status as a Student for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, 8

4. In relation to MLitt Transfer of Status interviews: General Regulations for the Degree of Master of Letters, §3. Admission of Candidates to the Status of Student for the Degree of Master of Letters, 9

5. In relation to MSc (Res) Transfer of Status interviews: General Regulations for the Degree of Master of Science by Research, §3. Admission of Candidates for the Degree of Master of Science by Research, 7

4.   External examiner remote attendance requests are the most likely, e.g. due to international travel restrictions (such as pandemic-related travel restrictions) or health issues preventing travel / attendance in person. Permission may also be granted for an external examiner to attend remotely if they are based outside the UK, and are the most appropriate person to act as an examiner, but would be travelling to the UK for the sole purpose of attending the viva.

5.   Internal examiners/milestone assessors and students may also request remote attendance at vivas/milestone interviews for the same travel / health reasons, including pandemic-related travel restrictions. Permission may be granted for a student to attend remotely if they have returned permanently to their non-UK residence and would be travelling to the UK for the sole purpose of attending the viva/milestone interview.

Agreement to remote attendance

6.   All examiners/milestone assessors and the student must agree in writing to remote attendance by any party at the viva/milestone interview. Directors of Graduate Studies should ensure that students are aware of the implications of agreeing or of not agreeing to remote attendance. If remote attendance has been requested by an examiner/milestone assessor for health or personal reasons, the student should not be given personal information, but should be told that there is a valid reason for the request.

7.   When considering whether remote attendance should be granted, Directors of Graduate Studies should take into account the following:

- The reasons for the request, and whether any party has any concerns
- The potential for delay to the viva/interview if the request is not granted, and the impact of this on the student
- Whether there are other viable options for holding the viva/interview if any party has concerns regarding remote attendance (e.g. a short delay, or appointing a new examiner/milestone assessor, in order to allow it to be held in person).

8.   In order to reduce delays if a new examiner needs to be appointed, students and supervisors should be reminded that they should suggest more than one name at the point of applying for appointment of examiners (via the GSO.3 form[7]).

9.   Vivas/interviews should not be delayed indefinitely due to issues with agreement to remote attendance, and the regulations governing time limits for completion of milestones and the degree must be taken into account. If a proposed delay to a milestone interview means that a candidate would need to apply for a deferral of Transfer or Confirmation of Status, good reason must be provided for this in the application in the usual way.

10.   If a student has concerns regarding remote attendance which relate to their disability, any adjustments which would allow them to feel comfortable in attending remotely should be explored. Guidance for Directors of Graduate Studies on adjustments to vivas/milestone interviews for students is available at Annex C of this *Policy and guidance on research degrees*, and most of the suggested adjustments are relevant to remote vivas/milestone interviews. The Disability Advisory Service can be consulted. If a student's disability means

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[7] Available on the Graduate Forms webpage

that they require an in-person viva/interview but there will be a delay until this is possible, they should not be required to attend a remote viva/interview instead, but there should be a discussion with them regarding the implications of the delay for their work, and any mitigations which can be put in place.

11.   If any party is unwilling to agree to remote attendance, or there is any difficulty, the Director of Graduate Studies should discuss the situation with the examiners/assessors and student to seek a resolution. In the rare cases where agreement cannot be reached, the student can follow the [University Student Complaints Procedure](#).

12.   If the Director of Graduate Studies is satisfied from the information received that:

- remote attendance is appropriate;
- all parties will have access to suitable space, equipment, internet connection and software in order to facilitate a remote viva; and
- all parties have agreed in writing

permission may be granted on behalf of the relevant board for remote attendance.

13.   The requirement to advertise a viva (in the *Gazette* or by posting a notice in the Examination Schools) is dispensed with if the viva is being held remotely, as is the requirement to wear sub-fusc.

14.   No party other than the examiners/assessors and the candidate may attend a remote viva/milestone interview (with the exception of a support person permitted to attend as an adjustment for the candidate's disability; see Annex C of this *Policy and guidance on research degrees*). A remote viva/milestone interview is considered to be one where any party is attending remotely; e.g. if an external examiner is attending via video call and the student and internal examiner are attending together in person in Oxford, this is considered to be a remote viva/milestone interview, and therefore no party other than the examiners/assessors may attend, with the exception above.

15.   Further guidance on holding remote vivas/milestone interviews is available in Annex E of this *Policy and guidance on research degrees*.

Vivas and milestone interviews taking place outside Oxford

16.   It is expected that vivas/milestone interviews should normally take place in Oxford. However, the relevant board has the power to grant permission in exceptional circumstances for vivas/milestone interviews to be held outside Oxford, without application needing to be made to the Proctors [8]. Applications should be made to the relevant board (usually via the Director of Graduate Studies), providing the following information:

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[8] The relevant [regulations](#) are:

1. In relation to vivas: General Regulations Governing Research Degrees, §7. Regulations concerning the Examination of Graduate Research Students, 3. Conduct of Oral Examinations for the Degrees of M.Litt., M.Sc. by Research, and D.Phil, i

- the reasons for the request and why attendance in Oxford is not possible;
- information on the proposed location and confirmation that there will be a suitable space (i.e. a quiet well-lit space where interruptions are unlikely) to hold the viva/interview.

17. It is most likely to be appropriate to permit vivas/milestone interviews to be held outside Oxford where research students are wholly or mainly based at overseas centres or partnership institutions, and Oxford examiners/assessors are also based at these centres. In these cases, Directors of Graduate Studies may wish to grant blanket permission on behalf of the relevant board for such vivas/milestone interviews. However, the examiners/milestone assessors and student will need to confirm with each other that they are happy with the location. Any request for a viva/interview to take place outside Oxford, but at a location other than the overseas centre where the student was based, would require an individual application.

18. It may very occasionally be appropriate to permit vivas/interviews outside of Oxford in other circumstances than for students based at overseas centres. For example, it may be more convenient for all parties to meet at the location of a conference they are attending. All examiners/milestone assessors and the student must agree in writing to the location of the viva/milestone interview.

19. If the Director of Graduate Studies is satisfied from the information received that

- holding the viva/milestone interview outside Oxford is appropriate;
- there is suitable space at the proposed location for the viva/interview; and
- all parties have agreed in writing

permission may be granted on behalf of the relevant board for the viva/interview to take place outside of Oxford.

20. In the rare cases where there are concerns regarding a decision about holding a viva/interview outside of Oxford which cannot be resolved by the Director of Graduate Studies via a conversation with the relevant parties, the student can follow the University Student Complaints Procedure.

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2. In relation to DPhil Transfer of Status interviews: General Regulations for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, §3. Admission of Candidates to the Status of Student for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, 8

3. In relation to DPhil Confirmation of Status interviews: General Regulations for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, §4. Confirmation of Status as a Student for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, 7

4. In relation to MLitt Transfer of Status interviews: General Regulations for the Degree of Master of Letters, §3. Admission of Candidates to the Status of Student for the Degree of Master of Letters, 8

5. In relation to MSc (Res) Transfer of Status interviews: General Regulations for the Degree of Master of Science by Research, §3. Admission of Candidates for the Degree of Master of Science by Research, 6

Vivas taking place fewer than four weeks after receipt of thesis by examiners

21.   The relevant board has the power to grant permission in exceptional circumstances for a viva to take place fewer than four weeks after the thesis has been made available to the examiners (via the Research Thesis Digital Submission (RTDS) application/the Submissions and Research Degrees Team), without application needing to be made to the Proctors[9]. Applications should be made by the examiners to the relevant board (usually via the Director of Graduate Studies), providing the following information:

- the proposed date of the viva;
- the reasons for the request and whether it has originated from the student or from the examiners;
- assurance that both examiners will have sufficient time to consider the thesis before the viva;
- the written agreement of the student and both examiners to the proposed date.

22.   Before granting such a request, the Director of Graduate Studies should ensure that the student has been informed of how much time the examiners will have to consider the thesis, and of the implications (e.g. an estimate of the delay to their viva) if they do not agree to the proposed date. The student does not have to agree to an early viva where requested by the examiners.

23.   Appropriate reasons for requests for an early viva might include:

- the implications for the student's employment or visa status if a viva were delayed;
- that holding of the viva on a certain date would facilitate in-person attendance by all parties rather than remote attendance by one or more;
- unforeseen issues with availability should the reason relate to in-person availability.

24.   Requests for vivas to be held fewer than 14 days after the thesis has been made available to the examiners (via the RTDS application/the Submissions and Research Degrees Team) should only be granted in the most exceptional circumstances. Such requests would generally be expected to be made on the grounds that there would be severe detriment to the student (e.g. in relation to employment or visa issues) if the viva were not held by a certain date. Consideration should be given in the first instance to possible alternatives such as remote attendance.

25.   If the Director of Graduate Studies is satisfied from the information received that:

- there is good reason for the viva to take place on the proposed date;
- both examiners will have sufficient time to consider the thesis before the viva; and
- both examiners and the student have agreed in writing to the proposed date

permission may be granted on behalf of the relevant board for the viva to take place fewer than four weeks after the thesis has been made available to the examiners (via the RTDS application/the Submissions and Research Degrees Team).

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[9] The relevant regulations are: General Regulations Governing Research Degrees, §7. Regulations concerning the Examination of Graduate Research Students, 3. Conduct of Oral Examinations for the Degrees of M.Litt., M.Sc. by Research, and D.Phil, v

26.   If the student or the examiners do not agree in writing to the viva taking place fewer than four weeks after the examiners receive their copy of the thesis, the viva should not take place on the proposed date. It should be rearranged in as timely a fashion as possible. If a significant delay seems likely, and especially if this would be of detriment to the student, alternatives to allow the viva to take place sooner should be explored, such as permitting remote attendance, or consideration being given to finding an alternative examiner. In order to reduce delays if a new examiner needs to be appointed, students and supervisors should be reminded that they should suggest more than one name at the point of applying for appointment of examiners (via the GSO.3 form[10]).

27.   If there are concerns relating to the date of a viva which the Director of Graduate Studies cannot resolve by a conversation between the relevant parties, the student can follow the University Student Complaints Procedure.

Restricted access to vivas

28.   Viva examinations (when held in person) may be attended by any member of the University in academic dress. The relevant board has the power, either at its own discretion or at the request of the candidate, supervisor or department, to restrict access to a viva, without application needing to be made to the Proctors[11]. This may involve limiting the attendance to only the examiners and the candidate, if this is felt to be necessary to protect the interests of the candidate, the University or both.

29.   Applications should be made to the relevant board (usually via the Director of Graduate Studies), explaining the reasons for and the extent of the restricted access requested. However, the board can decide to restrict access without such an application if it becomes aware of reasons why this would be appropriate.

30.   Appropriate reasons to restrict access to a viva might include:

- commercial confidentiality;
- the potential detrimental impact on individuals were material included in the thesis to become public;
- reasons related to a student's disability, health or personal circumstances, including the impact on a student of the attendance of any person other than the examiners.

The relevant board (or the Director of Graduate Studies acting on its behalf) should make a judgement in the context of their knowledge of the relevant subject area.

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[10] Available on the Graduate Forms webpage

[11] The relevant regulations are: General Regulations Governing Research Degrees, §7. Regulations concerning the Examination of Graduate Research Students, 3. Conduct of Oral Examinations for the Degrees of M.Litt., M.Sc. by Research, and D.Phil, ii

31.   If a student is unhappy with the board's decision (whether to restrict or not to restrict access to their viva), and this cannot be resolved through a conversation with the Director of Graduate Studies, they can follow the [University Student Complaints Procedure](#).

Vivas not advertised in accordance with regulations

32.   The relevant regulations provide that notice of a viva examination must be given, either by publishing a notice in the University *Gazette*, or by informing the Submissions and Research Degrees Team in writing and posting a notice at the place of examination[12]. However, if an error is made and this is overlooked, there is no requirement to make application to the Proctors, and the examination will remain valid. There is therefore no need to inform the Proctors' Office, or the Submissions and Research Degrees Team in the Examination Schools, if an error has been made in not giving notice of a viva examination.

33.   The requirement to give notice is dispensed with if the viva is being held remotely via video call. However, the Submissions and Research Degrees Team still requires information on upcoming agreed viva dates, in order to ensure records are kept up to date and to assist with queries from candidates and administrators. Internal examiners should therefore ensure that the Team (researchdegrees@admin.ox.ac.uk) is informed in advance of all agreed viva dates.

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[12] The relevant [regulations](#) are: General Regulations Governing Research Degrees, §7. Regulations concerning the Examination of Graduate Research Students, 3. Conduct of Oral Examinations for the Degrees of M.Litt., M.Sc. by Research, and D.Phil, vi

Annex E: Guidance on holding remote vivas/milestone interviews

1.   Annex D of this *Policy and guidance on research degrees* includes guidance for Directors of Graduate Studies on granting permission for vivas/milestone interviews remotely via video call. This annex provides further guidance on holding remote vivas/milestone interviews. A remote viva/milestone interview is considered to be one where any party is attending remotely; e.g. if an external examiner is attending via video call and the student and internal examiner are attending together in person in Oxford, this is considered to be a remote viva/milestone interview.

2.   Parties in all locations for a remote viva/milestone interview should:

- connect from a quiet, well-lit space where interruptions are unlikely;
- have access to computer equipment and an internet connection which are good enough to facilitate remote attendance by video call.

As of Michaelmas term 2023, Microsoft Teams is the recommended software for video calls in the University; the latest advice should be sought from local IT support.

3.   A test video call should be conducted prior to the viva/milestone interview to ensure that all parties have no difficulty in connecting. Alternative contact details in case of difficulties on the day should also be shared in advance.

4.   Any adjustments for disability required by either the student or the examiners/milestone assessors should be considered and agreed prior to the viva/milestone interview (see Annex C). Consideration should be given as to whether a remote viva/interview will require different/further adjustments compared to those which would have been required in person; e.g. more breaks might be needed.

5.   At the beginning of the viva/interview, all parties must:

- be satisfied as to the identity of those present (e.g. a student should have a University card visible);
- should state that they are satisfied with the quality of the connection.

If anyone is not satisfied, it will be the responsibility of the internal examiner (for vivas) or the assessors (for milestone interviews) to decide whether to continue.

6.   No communication at the viva/interview should take place without all parties being present. If any breaks are required, the viva/interview should not restart until all parties are reconnected and able to participate. If the viva/interview is disrupted at any point (e.g. one of the parties loses their connection) it will be the responsibility of the internal examiner (for vivas) or the assessors (for milestone interviews) to decide whether to adjourn, or whether to attempt to reconnect.

7.   Any disruption issues should be referenced in the report of the examiners/assessors on the viva/milestone interview, including the reasons for continuing with the examination. The student would be able to follow the [University Student Complaints Procedure](#) if they were dissatisfied with the actions taken.

8.   No video or audio recording of the viva/interview should be made, except where use of a digital recorder for the part of the viva where corrections are discussed is permitted as an adjustment for disability (see Annex C).