



University of the
West of England

Postgraduate Research Degree Programmes Code of Practice

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1. INTRODUCTION

The University's Postgraduate Research Degree Programmes Code of Practice provides an institutional framework of expectations for standards relating to PGR provision across the University. It outlines the responsibilities of all parties involved in this area of provision but is not intended to be a comprehensive or detailed manual of day to day processes and should be read in conjunction with:

- The University Graduate School Handbook;
- The University's Academic Regulatory Framework with particular reference to Section K 'Research Degree Regulations and Procedures' ;
- The University's policies including:
 - The Code of good research conduct.
 - Research ethics policy and procedures
 - Intellectual property policy
 - Assessment offences policy

<http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/aboutus/policies>

The Code references the key expectations and indicators contained within the UK Quality Code for Higher Education published by the Quality Assurance Agency, particularly those described in Chapter B11 Research degrees, 2012, and aligns to external frameworks such as the Vitae Researcher Development Framework.

2. DEFINITIONS OF RESEARCH AND RESEARCH DEGREES

- 2.1 UWE recognises both the Frascati and HEFCE Research Excellence Framework definitions of research:

“creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications.” (QAA Quality Code, 2012)

“a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared.” (REF, 2014)¹

- 2.2 At UWE research degrees include: Master of Philosophy (MPhil), Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), and a range of Professional Doctorates. Master of Philosophy by publication and Doctor of Philosophy by publication (DPhil) are available only to applicants who are employed by the University or an affiliated institution of the University, or who have a close association with the University as determined by an Executive Dean or the Vice Chancellor.

¹ <http://www.ref.ac.uk/>

2.3 Qualifications descriptors

At Doctoral level candidates at UWE will have conducted enquiry leading to the creation and interpretation of new knowledge through original research or other advanced scholarship that is at the forefront of the discipline or field of practice.

At MPhil level the work of candidates at UWE will demonstrate the ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project capable of contributing new knowledge close to the forefront of the discipline or field of practice.

The University's qualifications descriptors for research degrees from which this excerpt is taken may be found in full at section K3 of the Academic Procedures.

3. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

- 3.1 The maintenance of Academic standards within PGR Degree Programmes is managed on behalf of Academic Board through a network of committees comprising: Faculty Research Degree Committees (FRDC) reporting to the University Graduate School Committee (GSC), which in turn reports to the University Research, and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKE). There is provision for candidate representation on all of these committees. In addition recommendations for the award of research degrees are managed on behalf of Academic Board by the Research Degrees Award Board (RDAB). There is also a University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) with corresponding committees in each faculty. The relevant terms of reference for these committees are available at:
<http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/aboutus/structureandgovernance/governanceatuwe/academicboard/committeesandgroups.aspx>
- 3.2 The Graduate School Committee monitors the success of PGR programmes and ensures that faculty research degree committees are discharging their responsibilities appropriately via annual reporting processes. The GSC and faculties monitor annual quantitative data on recruitment profiles, submission, completion and withdrawal rates. GSC also monitors qualitative feedback from those concerned with PGR programmes e.g. via a regular candidate questionnaire which allows individuals to feedback about the quality of each stage of their PGR experience, from supervisors and independent chairs via forums and development sessions, and from examiners via examiner report comments. GSC and FRDCs use this information in the development of annual action plans to enhance the quality of PGR provision. Standard processes and forms are used throughout PGR programmes to ensure consistency and to enable regular review and enhancement across this area of the University's provision. The Graduate School Committee reviews PGR policy and all other formal and relevant regulatory documentation on an annual basis and submits changes to the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee and to Academic Board for approval as appropriate.

4. COMMUNICATION AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

The Graduate School website brings together in one place all the information, advice and guidance relevant to PGR and provides both information and application routes for prospective PGR candidates. It has dedicated pages for PGR candidates, supervisors and those involved in assessment. It provides links to the Blog and Twitter accounts, information about relevant events, development and training programmes and research forums, and to other sites both internal and external of relevance to the PGR Community. All key published documentation relevant to PGR is also publically available to download from the website. <http://www.uwe.ac.uk/graduateschool>

5. THE RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

- 5.1** The University fosters a research environment in which candidates are supported in doing and learning about research, in acquiring an appropriate range of personal and research skills, where they are encouraged to actively contribute to the research activities of their own research discipline and are also exposed to opportunities for working , exchanging knowledge and networking with colleagues in the University's wider research community.
- 5.2** In creating such an environment the University refers to and adopts the expectations and indicators of sound practice as set out in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, with particular reference to chapter B11.
- 5.3** Each Faculty through the designated nominee of the Executive Dean (normally the Director of Postgraduate Research Studies) is responsible for ensuring that research degrees are conducted in a supportive environment that is appropriate to the subject area of the research, and where excellence in research is both recognised and encouraged, having adequate regard to:
- the size of the research group, both in terms of staff and candidates
 - demonstrable research achievement, the depth of experience of research and of successful research degrees supervision among the staff group involved
 - access to facilities appropriate to the mode of study, including appropriate work and study space, IT support, learning and research tools, library access
 - access to appropriate training opportunities in professional development and researcher skills
 - access to academic and welfare support facilities
 - the provision of opportunities for interaction with other research candidates and the Faculty research community including membership of relevant University Research Institutes, Research Centres and Groups
- 5.4** Where a Faculty is not able to provide the appropriate research environment from within its own resources, it will be expected to do so by collaborating with one or more other groups, either within the University or elsewhere.

6. MARKETING AND PROMOTIONAL INFORMATION

- 6.1** All UWE marketing and promotional information about PGR awards will give a fair, full and consistent picture of what a PGR candidate can expect from the University, from its Graduate School and from faculties, departments and research groups. Applicants are able to access clear and accurate information to enable them to make an informed choice about their application to the University, including:
- current research strengths and areas of excellence within the University
 - potential supervisors
 - availability of relevant resources, such as equipment, library resources etc
 - availability of financial support, whether from sources internal or external to the University
 - core fees payable, including registration fees, and costs for any additional study or training modules not covered by the core fee
 - the availability of professional and research development training opportunities including workshops, modules or other units of study, and any requirements for the successful completion of these;
 - support and other pastoral arrangements for research candidates
 - University and Faculty expectations of research candidates
 - University Regulations and Procedures, including progression requirements, progress review arrangements, assessment and feedback mechanisms
 - procedures for resolution of problems, and for formal complaints
 - University research governance policies, including ethics, intellectual property rights, health and safety, academic integrity, and the 'Code of good research conduct'.
- 6.2** Staff involved in PGR studies also have a responsibility to familiarise themselves with this information and are expected to operate within this context.

7. SELECTION AND ADMISSIONS

- 7.1** Faculties are responsible for selection of candidates in accordance with approved University admissions processes which are administered by the University Graduate School. The admissions process is clear and consistently applied and appropriate information about the process is fully accessible. All applications are reviewed by the relevant faculty Director of PGR studies or their nominee prior to any invitation to interview being issued, to ensure that there is an appropriate match to the University's research strategy and faculty research excellence priorities. The confidentiality of the admissions process as it relates to individual applicants is maintained at all times.

Full details of the University's PGR Admissions process may be found here:

<http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/research/postgraduateresearchstudy/researchdegreesatuwe/eligibilityandhowtoapply.aspx>

- 7.2** Staff involved in the process of making decisions about admission must be fully conversant with University procedures and the PGR Admissions policy, the link for which may be found here:

<http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/research/postgraduateresearchstudy/pgresearchsupervisors.aspx>.

The Interview

- 7.3** Admission decisions will be made on the basis of the information supplied by the applicant on the appropriate application form and by personal interview. Personal interview will normally be face to face, but alternative mechanisms, such as video conferencing can be adopted when circumstances make this more appropriate. Interviews shall be conducted in accordance with the University's PGR Admission policy such that an accurate assessment of the applicant's suitability can be made.
- 7.4** The admissions panel for PhD awards will comprise at least two members of staff with relevant experience and expertise, one of whom shall be a member of the Faculty Research Degrees Committee who, having undertaken training in admissions processes specifically for PGR candidates, shall chair the panel. A member of the potential supervisory team, normally the proposed Director of Studies shall also be a member of the panel. The panel will reflect appropriate expertise in the subject area of the proposed project.
- 7.5** In the case of Professional Doctorate awards the interview will be chaired by the Programme Leader or other experienced research supervisor from the programme team who has received the appropriate training.
- 7.6** The primary purpose of the interview is to assess the applicant's potential

to undertake the proposed programme of research and to explore issues and requirements to enable the successful completion of the project and achievement of the award.

7.6 The interview and any background information will make explicit to the applicant:

- what is expected in terms of commitment to academic studies and attendance, workload, required attendance and presentations at seminars and conferences
- what may be available in terms of opportunities for teaching/supporting learning and the development and training that will be provided should such opportunities arise
- expectations in terms of meeting the requirements of the University regarding ongoing progress monitoring and assessment, completion of required programmes of training and timely completion of the award
- what support is available both from the Faculty and the University Graduate School.

Funding and Resources

7.7 It is most important that the applicant understands the financial commitment he/she will be undertaking in terms of registration and project fees and any other additional costs throughout the period of study e.g. for additional language study or other training that is not covered by the core fee.

7.8 The resources and facilities to support the research project should be in place before any offer of a place is made. The Executive Dean or nominee must approve these arrangements before the candidate can be registered.

Entry Requirements

7.9 For a supervised PhD or MPhil the normal expectation is that applicants will hold at least a 2:1 or a Masters qualification. Entry qualifications for other research awards e.g. Professional Doctorates are as stipulated in individual programme specifications.

7.10 Where the Faculty wishes to consider applicants offering professional experience in lieu of formal qualification, the applicant must be able to demonstrate suitability for study at the required level in the context of the nature and scope of the work/project proposed. The Faculty may place additional entry criteria, including written or oral submissions, on such applicants in order to determine their suitability.

7.11 The minimum level of English language proficiency qualification required for international applicants wishing to pursue research is IELTS 6.5-7.5 overall or accepted equivalents.

7.12 Proof of qualifications will be required as part of the application process

In addition the applicant will be required to supply details of two referees who may be approached concerning the applicant's academic attainment and suitability to undertake a research programme.

Approval of Application and Formal Offer

- 7.13** Recommendation for admission should be made in accordance with approved University policy and procedures. A candidate cannot be accepted onto an award by a supervisor alone.
- 7.14** The formal offer letter to the applicant should be issued by the Executive Dean's nominee normally the Faculty Director of PGR Studies, and, together with the terms and conditions of the offer and any accompanying documentation, will include as a minimum:
- confirmation of mode, level, period, starting-date of study
 - title of the proposed research project
 - information about research skills development opportunities and other training requirements
 - reference to requirements for and timing of progress review and assessment including the progression examination and subsequent progress review points together with the consequences of failure to demonstrate satisfactory progress
 - fees and other charges
 - the name of the provisional Director of Studies
 - facilities and support available to the candidate
 - expectations in relation to academic and personal integrity and conduct; research governance including ethics, intellectual property rights, health and safety, and dignity at work.
 - the requirements of any sponsor, collaborative body, or relevant professional bodies.

8. SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH DEGREE CANDIDATES

- 8.1** All research degree candidates are entitled to proper levels of support in their studies, which will be provided partly by the University's Graduate School, partly by the Faculty and partly by the supervisory team.
- 8.2** The supervisory team will be responsible for ensuring that the candidate receives timely academic support and guidance:
- to plan and implement their research programme in accordance with the University's expectations about good governance, academic integrity and ethics;
 - to develop an appropriate researcher development and training plan;
 - to prepare for formal assessment points such as confirmation of project registration (RD1), the progression examination, and progress review in subsequent stages;
 - by providing comments and feedback on the first full draft of the thesis.
- 8.3** The Faculty will be responsible for ensuring that the candidate has access to:
- appropriate induction activities (see also section 10)
 - resources required to complete the project in a timely manner, including an appropriate place to work;
 - all necessary research facilities, including consumable materials in accordance with the terms and conditions and fee level agreed in the initial offer;
 - appropriate IT facilities, although the demands of the individual situation will determine whether this should involve the provision of a specific computer workstation for the sole use of the candidate;
 - appropriate progress review processes (see also section 14).

8.4 The University Graduate School will provide

- a range of induction and welcome events;
- advice and guidance accessible both online and face-to-face on the day to day aspects of PGR life including payment of fees, registration, enrolment on taught modules, progress review and submission requirements etc.;
- a 'signpost' referral mechanism to student advisors and services providing more specialised advice covering financial matters, assistance with accommodation problems, visas and other Borders Agency matters, PGR focussed careers advice and general counselling;
- a range of personal, professional and researcher skills development opportunities via its workshop series, its 'Research in Contemporary Context' module, the residential summer course and other research events;
- regular opportunities for candidates to provide feedback both individually and collectively about the quality of their PGR degree experience;
- competent, timely and professional advice on the interpretation and application of the University Regulations and Procedures;
- effective and timely administration of the final assessment of all research degrees.

9. REGISTRATION ON A POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH AWARD

9.1 Candidates are provided with registration forms for completion prior to their agreed start date by the Graduate School, together with information and guidance on:

- Paying fees
- Enrolling on taught modules or additional study
- Progress review arrangements
- Key dates and how to access key documents including the Graduate School Handbook, the PGR Code of Practice, and Academic regulations and procedures.

9.2 Prompt registration is essential, since no individual can be counted as a research candidate and no active supervision provided or identity cards and access log-ins generated until registration has been completed. Special consideration should be given to part-time candidates and candidates based at a distance or overseas. Once registered candidates contact their Director of Studies to arrange the day and time of their first meeting on arrival and where appropriate to discuss the range, availability and timing of taught modules on which the candidate may wish to enrol.

9.3 Faculties may consider it appropriate to appoint an experienced research candidate to act as a mentor for new research candidates for a specified period of time.

9.4 The University encourages the participation of PGR candidates in teaching and learning support activities, but unless otherwise specified, can give no guarantee of the availability of paid teaching work (see also section 16).

10. INDUCTION

10.1 The Graduate School provides a series of University wide induction welcome events shortly after each PGR intake in October, January and April, and these combine with Faculty specific induction to provide candidates with an introduction to their programme of research study, their local research environment and University's wider research community

10.2 Each Director of Studies is also expected to arrange a tailored induction programme appropriate to their candidate's particular research project, environment and circumstances. The Graduate School provides Directors of Studies with guidance on the aspects of their candidates' induction for which they are responsible including:

- where they will be based, and the facilities available to them in their workplace;
- how to contact members of their supervisory team, and other relevant senior members of staff (e.g. Director of the Graduate School, Faculty PGR Director, Executive Dean or Associate Executive Dean, etc.)
- meeting other research candidates and relevant staff within the Department
- familiarisation with the campus, library, cafes, shop, bank and Students Union etc.;
- dates for submission of project confirmation documentation (RD1 process), and for the first progression report;
- Developing an appropriate researcher development and training plan;
- health and safety and an introduction to ethics, research governance and good conduct.

10.3 During induction new candidates are directed to the Graduate School Handbook which provides appropriate and timely information including:

- supervisory processes, institutional expectations, University Academic Regulatory framework, information on the University's research culture and wider research community
- the role of the Research Degrees Award Board and of the Faculty Research Degrees Committee
- codes of conduct, academic integrity, research governance and ethics, and health and safety policies
- information on access to IT facilities, Library Services, and other relevant resources
- registration, fees, ISIS
- training requirements and programmes of training and development provided centrally and within the Faculty
- relevant seminar programmes and other research events.

11. THE SUPERVISION PROCESS

- 11.1** All candidates are supported and guided by a team of supervisors, consisting of at least two suitably qualified academics or professionals as relevant, one of whom is designated the Director of Studies. Where circumstances require it, there may be more than two supervisors but a supervision team should not be larger than three unless there is a clear rationale for it. The Director of Studies must be a permanent member of UWE staff.
- 11.2** The Faculty Research Degrees Committee is responsible for the approval of the supervision team, including approving any changes to the team during the course of the research degree programme. In approving a supervision team, the committee will consider the depth of research experience and expertise, experience of completed supervision, any experience of research degree examining, and the workloads of staff.
- 11.3** Workload expectations for supervisory teams are managed via the University workload allocation management system (WAMS) which ensures that each supervisory team is allocated the same time resource per candidate (dependent upon the FT/PT status of the candidate) which is then distributed amongst the team as appropriate by the Associate Head of Department and Director of Studies.
- 11.4** It is expected that individuals should not normally act as Director of Studies for more than six MPhil or Doctoral candidates concurrently, although they may in addition act as a second supervisor for a further four candidates where this would be beneficial to the overall composition of the supervisory team in terms of subject expertise or experience. Exceptionally Faculty Research Degree Committees may consider applications from PGR programmes wishing to allocate a greater number of candidates to each Director of Studies, but a clear rationale must be provided, approved and documented.
- 11.5** Some research degree programmes will benefit from the involvement of additional academic or other expert, for example where the project involves a collaborative establishment, industrial partner or other organisation. When this is identified, such experts will normally be appointed by the Faculty Research Degrees Committee as advisers rather than as members of the supervision team and recorded on the project registration form (RD1). The role and purpose of such appointments will be clearly set out by the Director of Studies in writing to both the adviser and the candidate and other members of the supervision team, but will normally be voluntary and unpaid.

- 11.6** Unless there are exceptional circumstances, clearly identified and documented by the Faculty Research Degrees Committee, no person should be appointed as a Director of Studies unless he/she has supervised at least one research degree candidate at the same or a higher level to successful and timely completion.
- 11.7** Training in supervision is provided by the Graduate School for all new supervisors and regular opportunities for updating supervision skills are also provided. Faculties will ensure that members of staff have access to these development opportunities. Faculties and the Graduate School will maintain records of the staff development in supervision skills undertaken by members of supervisory teams as appropriate. Members of staff who are new to the role of Director of Studies at UWE must complete appropriate training in supervision skills, and University processes.

Responsibilities of the Director of Studies and the Supervisory Team

- 11.8** The Director of Studies is responsible for ensuring that supervision is carried out in accordance with the University's academic regulatory framework, policies, and this Code of Practice.
- 11.9** The Director of Studies will ensure that the candidate and all members of the supervisory team understand the roles and responsibilities of each member of the team.
- 11.10** The Director of Studies is responsible for ensuring that the candidate is fully aware of the requirements of the University and the Faculty, in terms of registration, progression examinations and progress review, research development training, access to resources, IPR, research governance and good conduct, ethics and academic integrity, health and safety and dignity at work in accordance with Academic Regulations.
- 11.11** In the course of routine supervision and irrespective of formal progress review processes, the Director of Studies is responsible for ensuring that the candidate is made aware in a timely fashion of any concerns with the rate of progress being made, or about poor research practice, poor scholarship, or any other aspect of the project, and is provided with advice and guidance on how best to rectify the problem. The Chair of the Faculty Research Degrees Committee should also be made aware where these concerns become serious.

- 11.12** The Supervision team must ensure that it meets with the candidate at appropriate intervals, and that the meetings are properly conducted and recorded. The University defines formal supervision meetings as scheduled, uninterrupted time in an appropriate environment. A suitable environment may be a designated meeting room, but where this is not possible meetings may also take place via video conference, Skype, email, conference call etc. as long as **all** participants are happy with these arrangements. These meetings should, as a minimum, cover a discussion of the candidate's progress since the last meeting and should agree a set of actions resulting from a review of the project plan, publication plan and training and development needs.
- 11.13** The number and appropriate frequency of meetings will depend on several factors: the nature of the research, the mode of attendance (part-time or full-time) and the particular stage of the research programme. It is the responsibility of the supervision team to plan the frequency of meetings explicitly, in discussion with the candidate. However the University expects that **a minimum** of 10 formal supervision meetings should take place over the course of an academic year for full time candidates, normally arranged at between 4-6 week intervals, with pro rata arrangements for part time candidates. The full supervisory team should aim to meet with the candidate on at least three of these occasions during the academic year. These arrangements ensure that PGR provision accords with the University's policy on attendance and engagement.
- 11.14** The normal expectation will be for the candidate to maintain a written record of each formal meeting, and to take responsibility for circulating such records to all members of the supervision team. It is also good practice for the Director of Studies to maintain an archive of these records for the purposes of progress monitoring.
- 11.15** It is recognised that there will be informal meetings, conversations and other day-to-day contact between members of the supervision team and the candidate in a variety of contexts. It is not expected that supervisors will keep a record of these informal interactions when there is no reason for concern about the progress of the project. However when there is reason to suppose that the project is not proceeding well, or that the candidate is not fully engaged it is in the best interests of both candidate and supervisor for the supervisor to keep a brief record of these informal interactions should it later transpire that the candidate needs to access more formal support mechanisms or indeed to suspend or withdraw from their studies.

12. REGISTRATION OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

12.1 Confirmation of the candidate's project registration (the RD1 process) is considered for approval by the Faculty Research Degrees Committee within three months of initial registration for full time candidates, six months for part time candidates. The Director of Studies should work closely with the candidate during this initial phase and is responsible for providing guidance on the development of a detailed, well-defined research project specification and associated programme of work and reading. This must be:

- within the candidate's own capabilities and interests;
- within the expertise of the proposed supervisory team;
- practicable in terms of available physical resources;
- appropriate in terms of any necessary ethical approval;
- feasible in terms of completion within the allowable registration period for the award.

12.2 As part of the project registration process, the Director of Studies is responsible for working with the candidate to complete a training needs analysis and to formulate a training plan which may incorporate informal and/or non-assessed elements as appropriate, as well as programmes professional development and/or mandatory and assessed Faculty research training modules. Wherever possible it is recommended that the Vitae Researcher Development Framework is used as a basis for the design of this training plan.

13. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH TRAINING

- 13.1** All research candidates are required to undertake an assessed training and development programme of a minimum M level credit value, to enable them to fulfil the requirements of the UWE MPhil or Doctoral Descriptor. The programme should be appropriate to their needs, adding to or enhancing their subject knowledge where necessary, enabling them to acquire the skills they need to become effective researchers, and where appropriate supporting their teaching and learning support activities (see also section 16). It is likely that this will also include participation in non-assessed training and development activities which complement assessed learning elements.
- 13.2** The candidate's training needs are identified by means of an individual training needs analysis carried out during discussions between the Director of Studies and the candidate as part of the project registration confirmation (RD1) process. This is revisited at each stage of registration as part of the progress review process to reflect any changes in the requirements of the research project or in the needs of the candidate.
- 13.3** The sources from which the candidate may acquire the necessary training are various and flexible. They may include the use of any appropriate standard credit bearing taught module from within the University's provision, completion of the Graduate School module 'Research in Contemporary Context', attendance at Graduate School workshops (see below), study delivered elsewhere in the University (e.g. language studies), or learning achieved externally to the University.
- 13.4** The Graduate School provides access to a coherent and appropriate programme of professional development and skills training opportunities for research candidates. This is aligned to recognised external descriptors and frameworks e.g. the Vitae Researcher Development Framework and is structured around the Vitae domains:
- Knowledge and intellectual abilities
 - Personal effectiveness
 - Research governance and organisation
 - Engagement influence and impact.
- The Graduate School also offers a Masters level 30 credit research based learning module 'Research in Contemporary Context' which encourages candidates to reflect upon their learning gained via these workshops and through other training in the context of their own research project work, and which is assessed via an evidence based portfolio and case study.
- 13.5** The Graduate School will ensure that clear information is easily accessible about what training and development opportunities are available in the University, when and where these elements are provided, and any deadlines by which these need to be completed.

- 13.6** The Graduate School ensures that an accurate record of research training undertaken to fulfil assessed accredited training requirements of an award is maintained for each candidate and can also offer a software facility for candidates to maintain a personal development plan in which they can record their own training, learning log/diary or the progress of their development.
- 13.7** Information about assessment regulations and the consequences of referral or failure in credit bearing taught modules is provided via the University's website at <http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/students/academicadvice/assessments.aspx>
Advice about the consequences of non fulfilment of any taught component in the context of a candidate's research degree award requirements is provided in the Graduate School Handbook.

14. PROGRESSION AND PROGRESS REVIEW

- 14.1** Progression relates to the stages through which candidates, their research project and their associated learning advance. Progression is dependent upon the successful achievement of the progress point relevant to each stage of the candidate's award registration.
- 14.2** Candidates individual progress is reviewed regularly via a framework that is both retrospective and prospective, measuring achievement to date and agreeing objectives for future progress. It incorporates formal events such as the confirmation of project registration (RD1) and the progression examination as well as less formal progress review at the end of each subsequent stage of the candidate's registration. It provides candidates with formative feedback throughout their project to ensure that the project remains on track and is completed within the allowable registration period for their award.

The Progression Examination

- 14.3** The Progression Examination is intended to combine assessment of the formulation and planning of the research project with an early evaluation of progress and the continuing suitability of the project as a basis for the research degree in question.
- 14.4** Candidates are informed of the timing and requirements of the progression examination at the point of admission and of the consequences of failure to progress.
- 14.5** Procedures and guidance is clear and easily accessible to all those involved in progression examinations, and reflects the requirements of Academic Regulations.
- 14.6** The Director of Studies is responsible for ensuring that arrangements for the progression examination are made in good time and that preparation for the examination is given appropriate weight and significance during the first stage of study.
- 14.7** Faculty Research Degrees Committees are responsible for the appointment of two independent internal examiners for the progression examination who may also act as independent reviewers for progress review points in the subsequent stages.
- 14.8** Candidates will be provided with timely and appropriate written feedback on their performance following the progression examination.
- 14.9** The candidate has the right to apply for a review of progression decisions in accordance with Academic Regulations.

Progress Review

- 14.10** The focus for review in the stages subsequent to the progression examination should be to ensure that adequate progress is being maintained.
- 14.11** Review processes include arrangements for adequate and independent scrutiny and assessment of progress by those not normally associated with the research project or the supervisory team.
- 14.12** From the range agreed within the progress review framework faculties may determine the most appropriate format for material that is to be submitted as evidence of progress that best reflects the research culture within that area of study. This must be sufficiently rigorous to provide an adequate test of the candidate's knowledge and understanding of the subject material, of progress to date and of objectives set for the future and should reflect the particular stage that the candidate has reached in their award. The review should also consider knowledge of appropriate research methodology and other subject specific skills, confirm that the conditions of any ethical approval remain appropriate, confirm the completion of any compulsory taught elements for that stage and consider any changes to the candidates ongoing training needs.
- 14.13** The outcome of the progress review is considered by the Faculty Research Degrees Committee who will recommend to the Research Degrees Award Board progression from one stage of the candidate's registration to the next.
- 14.14** The Graduate School will ensure that procedures and guidance are transparent and accessible to all those involved in progress review and that participants are clear as to its purpose and value.
- 14.15** Candidates should be provided with appropriately detailed and timely feedback arising from any review of progress to help them identify any issues to be addressed. Candidates are also provided with regular opportunities to comment individually about the quality of each stage of their PGR experience including areas such as support and supervision, via the annual questionnaire (see section 20). There are also mechanisms for candidates to raise any issues in a confidential environment on an individual basis at any point during the year.
- 14.16** Faculty PGR Directors and Faculty Research Degrees Committees should continue to be active in monitoring the pastoral aspects of the candidate's learning experience to facilitate the early identification of problems that may adversely affect completion – e.g. the candidate/supervisor relationship, workload etc.

15. DISSEMINATION, PUBLICATIONS AND CONFERENCES

- 15.1** Postgraduate research degree candidates will be encouraged to take an appropriate part in dissemination activities, including academic publishing where appropriate, to an extent and in media which will depend on the discipline and the field of research.
- 15.2** In planning a research degree programme, the supervisory team should work with the candidate to formulate a publication plan, or other appropriate dissemination plan that is appropriate to the discipline, which should be considered regularly at formal supervision meetings. Progress against the plan should be monitored. Such plans will take into account that the candidate may not be able to take the leading role in writing academic publications or other discipline appropriate outputs in the early stages of their programme, but should be encouraged to develop the skill to do so during it. Supervisors should advise candidates on appropriate and relevant media for their research outputs, including conferences, exhibitions, screenings etc. as well as journals.
- 15.3** Faculties will need to consider how resources will be provided to support publication and other dissemination formats including the cost of conference attendance within the envelope of the project fee, and clear information should be provided to the candidate from the outset on what support is available within this context. Bids for research funding which include support for research candidates should include, where possible, funding for appropriate dissemination activities including conference attendance. Faculties should also consider what additional funding may be available for dissemination activities over and above what is provided for within the project fee.
- 15.4** The Graduate School provides development and training opportunities in the skills associated with effective dissemination, including academic publishing and the art and science of communication. Faculties should also provide opportunities and fora for research candidates to present their work to their peers, to professional colleagues where appropriate, and to academic staff within the faculty and to the wider University research community.

16. INVOLVEMENT IN TEACHING AND SUPPORTING THE LEARNING OF OTHERS

- 16.1** The University's 2020 strategy identifies research activity, output and knowledge exploration as key to informing and enriching its taught curricula. Research degree candidates have the potential to play a significant role in supporting learning and teaching in this respect and the Graduate School has developed a [policy for PGRs who teach or involved in supporting learning](#) which underpins this aim
- 16.2** All PGR candidates should be made aware of the opportunities available for teaching and learning support and may chose whether they wish to engage with them, unless otherwise already required to undertake teaching as part of an agreed contract of employment with the University.
- 16.3** Unless clearly stated otherwise and in writing, no PGR candidate shall have the right to be given paid teaching work in the University. Any decision to allocate teaching work shall have adequate regard for the suitability of the individual to teach and for the quality of the learning experience of those students being taught.
- 16.4** Heads of Department are encouraged to ensure that PGR candidates are matched to relevant teaching areas that will utilise and be informed by their research expertise
- 16.5** The Faculty must ensure that no PGR candidate, whether full or part time, is expected to undertake an amount of teaching or other learning support work e.g. lesson preparation, marking, lab support etc.that would hinder completion of the research degree in accordance with the initially agreed timescale. They may undertake teaching and learning support activities only with the permission of the Director of Studies and in accordance with the following:
- FT candidates may undertake a maximum of 120 hours of such activity academic year;
 - Any FT candidate wishing to undertake more that 120 hours per year must change to a part-time registration;
 - FT Bursary candidates must not exceed the 120 hours maximum.
- 16.6** Faculty Research Degrees Committees are responsible for monitoring the level and impact of ongoing teaching commitments of research degree candidates and for advising Heads of Department if this becomes a problem
- 16.7** PGR candidates undertaking teaching or learning support activities will be paid as Associate Lecturers/Hourly paid Lecturers under the relevant terms and conditions and rates of pay for those roles and responsibilities.
- 16.8** Unless clearly stated otherwise and in writing, the performance of a PGR candidate as a teacher shall form no part of the assessment of the

research degree that the candidate undertakes. Exceptions to this are restricted to Professional Doctorates or other similar programmes where teaching is part of the professional practice that is developed within the doctoral programme and described in the published programme specification.

- 16.9** The University Graduate School will co-ordinate a suite of centrally provided and faculty based mentoring and training opportunities to ensure that PGR candidates can access support and training that is appropriate to the teaching or learning support activities to which they are committed. Completion of training in this way may in some instances contribute towards the research training credit requirement for MPhil and doctoral awards.
- 16.10** Where a research candidate is involved in teaching, supervisors will need to recognise that this imposes timetabling constraints on candidates, and should discuss with the candidate how this may affect the progress and timing of research or other outputs.

17. EXTERNAL COLLABORATORS AND FUNDERS

- 17.1** Co-operation with industrial, commercial, professional or research establishments is encouraged. The nature of arrangements with any collaborating establishment should be clearly defined and agreed in writing by the University prior to the commencement of the project. This should include, for example, the use of any facilities, access to data, ownership of IP etc. Details of these arrangements will be made available to the candidate. The University will also make available to collaborators information about ongoing academic aspects of the project, any requirements of candidates and its expectations of collaborators in their supervision of candidates. External supervisors from collaborative establishments will also be sent an information pack providing details of how they can access key published documents, sources of guidance, and supervisor development events.
- 17.2** Where a project involves extended periods working in collaborating organisations, the supervisory team must ensure that although absent from their principal place of study, candidate progress continues to be carefully supported and monitored.

18. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

- 18.1** All supervisors must familiarise themselves with the University's policy on Intellectual Property (IP) which can be found at <http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/aboutus/policies> and must ensure that candidates are aware of their obligations regarding appropriate third party IP consent with respect to material included within their thesis.
- 18.2** Under the current IP policy, UWE claims ownership of all IP, IPR, products and materials arising from research and/or project outcomes arising from postgraduate study (including IP, IPR, products and materials produced by part-time postgraduate candidates), unless specifically excluded, or otherwise agreed in writing between the postgraduate candidate and UWE, following a recommendation by the Executive Dean (or their nominee) and the Director of RBI. For third party funded work or where IP ownership by UWE is essential, candidates must still be asked to sign the "Assignment of Intellectual Property Rights Agreement" which also covers obligations relating to confidentiality and power of attorney.
- 18.3** Research candidates provide in writing their consent to abide by the UWE IP Policy and Regulations as part of the registration process by agreeing to the terms and conditions of the University's formal offer of PGR registration.

19. CHANGES IN RESEARCH DEGREE REGISTRATION

- 19.1** Faculty Research Degree Committees are responsible for the consideration and approval of major changes to a research candidate's project direction, to the supervisory team, the candidate's mode of attendance, and temporary suspension of a candidate's PGR degree registration in accordance with the university's academic regulatory framework and published policies. The Committee is also responsible for considering cases where the extension or permanent withdrawal of a candidate's registration may become necessary and for making recommendations to this end to the Research Degrees Award Board.
- 19.2** Procedures are clear, consistently applied and fully accessible via the Graduate School website and key documents e.g. Graduate Handbook. Committees must operate within the context of University policy on confidentiality and be mindful of the need for sensitive handling of personal information and circumstances. They should be well understood by both staff and candidates. Candidates in particular should be made aware of the avenues of help and support available to them.
- 19.3** Significant changes should not be undertaken lightly or approved without appropriate evidence. Supervisors must actively consider when changes are appropriate and in the candidate's best interest. The candidate should be appropriately informed of, and involved in, the process.
- 19.4** **Suspension of Registration** should be considered in the event of external circumstances, including illness, which prevents the candidate from working. Applications must be supported by appropriate evidence and are not normally approved for more than one year at a time. The Committee should also consider whether it is likely that the candidate will be able to re-engage with their studies and complete the work after the period of suspension and what measures may need to be in place to enable them to do so.
- 19.5** **Extension of the Registration Period** will not automatically be approved by the Research Degrees Award Board, and will usually be for no more than one year at a time. There must be good reason for the delay in completing the project together with a realistic revised date for completion.

19.6 Withdrawal of Registration may be initiated by the candidate or the University. The PGR withdrawal policy providing detailed guidance is published on the Graduate School website. The Director of Studies is responsible for notifying the Faculty Research Degrees Committee as soon as it becomes clear that the candidate is no longer making satisfactory progress and is unlikely to complete the work, or has informed the Director of Studies of his/her intention to withdraw from the Award. The candidate must be adequately informed of any intention to withdraw their registration which must be supported by appropriate evidence. There should be adequate opportunity for the candidate to remediate and get their project back on track, with the support and guidance of the supervisory team. The decision to withdraw a candidate's registration is the responsibility of the Research Degrees Award Board who will consider the recommendation of the Faculty Research Degrees Committee.

19.7 Changes to the supervisory team may be advisable when:

- a key member of the supervisory team leaves the Institution
- the direction of the candidate's project changes such that the supervisory team no longer has the subject expertise to support the candidate appropriately
- a supervisor is absent from the University, through illness, sabbatical, or other reason and is unavailable by other means of communication for a significant period (It is for the Faculty to determine what is meant by 'significant' based on the candidate's individual circumstances and the role and responsibilities of the supervisor concerned, but this will normally be taken to be eight weeks or more. Faculties should ensure that temporary alternative arrangements are in place to support the candidate as appropriate should the absence be for a shorter period)
- the relationship between supervisor and candidate has irrevocably broken down and remains so after all reasonable attempts at mediation via the Faculty's internal procedures have been exhausted
- the Executive Dean or their nominee determines that such a change will be in the best interests of either party.

20 FEEDBACK and MONITORING & EVALUATION MECHANISMS

20.1 Mechanisms are provided to enable those concerned with postgraduate research programmes to provide feedback. These include:

- candidate, supervisor and administrative representation on appropriate University and Faculty committees
- regular opportunities for supervisors, independent chairs and other constituencies involved in the support and assessment of PGR degrees to provide feedback and suggestions on PGR processes;
- a regular candidate questionnaire that allows all PGR candidates, including those who have recently completed, to feedback on an individual basis about the quality of each stage of their PGR experience and to access confidential advice and support if necessary;
- designated individuals, independent of the supervisory team, to whom comments can be made in confidence

Any feedback of an individual or confidential nature will be sensitively considered and followed up appropriately with due regard to candidate confidentiality.

20.2 The Graduate School and faculties will monitor annual quantitative data on recruitment profiles, withdrawal, submission and completion rates. Aggregated candidate and examiner feedback, appropriately anonymised, identifying general trends, good practice and areas for action will also be used, together with quantitative data, to inform annual faculty reporting to the Graduate School Committee and the subsequent development of faculty and Graduate School action plans for the enhancement of PGR support. The University monitors centrally data on the number of appeals and complaints submitted to the University complaints process and reports annually to Academic Board.

20.3 The Research Degrees Award Board receives an annual report from its Chief External Examiner on the Institution's PGR assessment processes and academic standards the consideration of which, together with information collated from individual examiner reports, informs the Institution's quality assurance processes for PGR assessment.

21. FINAL ASSESSMENT PROCESSES

Selection and Appointment of Examiners

- 21.1** The responsibility for identification of appropriate examiners lies with the Director of Studies, who should start the process during the 12 months prior to the anticipated date of the examination, in consultation with:
- other members of the supervisory team
 - senior research staff within the discipline at UWE or elsewhere
 - other research active academics in closely related fields
 - the candidate.
- 21.2** The judgement of the research should be made by academics uninfluenced by personal knowledge of the candidate. Where a candidate might be considered to have a relationship which may compromise the objectivity of any examiner, either through employment or by any other means, two external examiners must be appointed.
- 21.3** Academic members of staff who have previously acted as the candidate's progression examiner, or independent reviewer for subsequent progress review are not disbarred from nomination as a internal examiner at final assessment, but must comply with the criteria for appointment set out in the academic regulations
- 21.4** To ensure an appropriate balance of experience on the panel, the appointment of an inexperienced internal examiner is normally compensated by the appointment of an experienced external examiner and vice versa. Normally panels will have the combined experience of at least four degree examinations at the same level as the candidate or higher between them.
- 21.5** The Graduate School Assessment Team will manage all examination appointments for approval on behalf of Academic Board in accordance with Academic Regulations. Academic Board will also appoint a senior and experienced researcher to act as an Independent Chair of the viva panel, drawn from a list of approved Chairs all of whom will have received appropriate training. Letters of appointment will be issued by the Graduate School Assessment Team.
- 21.6** The Director of Studies and relevant Faculty contacts will be notified of the full membership of the panel by the Graduate School Assessment Team.
- 21.7** Panel appointments are valid for a period of 12 months from the date of approval, after which they will lapse unless the thesis has been submitted for examination.

21.8 Once appointed, examiners receive appropriate information and guidance on these procedures prior to the examination date via the Graduate School Assessment Team. The panel will also receive a further short procedural briefing from the Independent Chair during the pre-viva preparation session.

First Stage: The Thesis

21.9 The Director of Studies, in consultation with the candidate, the Independent Chair and the examiners, will set the date of the viva and will inform the Graduate School Assessment Team.

21.10 The requisite copies of the thesis (one soft bound for each member of the panel including the Independent Chair) must be received by the Graduate School Assessment Team for distribution to the panel at least eight weeks prior to the proposed date of the viva. At the same time an identical electronic copy must also be deposited in the University's Research Repository where it will be held on a closed access basis until the completion of the award.

21.11 There is no option for further work to be undertaken on the thesis once the thesis has been submitted for assessment and before the viva takes place.

21.12 The examiners are required to prepare preliminary reports on the thesis before the viva.

21.13 The candidate will not receive copies of the examiners' preliminary reports.

Second Stage: The Viva

- 21.15** The Examining Panel will meet for an appropriate period of at least 30 minutes prior to the viva in order to plan the viva. The Independent Chair is responsible for ensuring that the viva is conducted in accordance with the Regulations and Code of Practice of the University.
- 21.16** A member of the supervisory team may be present at the viva, subject to the agreement of the candidate but is not permitted to speak except at the express invitation of the Chair whose questions will be limited to those of a factual nature.

Third Stage: Examiners' Outcome Recommendation

- 21.17** The range of possible examination outcomes is detailed in at Section K16 of the Academic Regulations. Where the candidate is awarded the degree subject to minor amendments, major amendments, or is permitted to resubmit and be re-examined, the Chair will be responsible for the co-ordination of a written report reflecting the requirements of the panel as to the alterations and additional work that must be undertaken. This will be communicated to the candidate and Director of Studies by the Graduate School Assessment Team.
- 21.18** One re-examination may be permitted subject to submission of the revised thesis within the approved period from the date of the latest part of the first examination.

22. RESOLVING PROBLEMS AND ACADEMIC COMPLAINTS

- 22.1** The University has developed a three stage Complaints Procedure to provide a clear route for making a complaint. The University expects that the majority of issues can be resolved informally through normal contacts and discussion between staff, candidates and other interested parties without the need to instigate formal procedures. An issue or complaint should therefore initially be raised through someone close to its origin. <http://www.uwe.ac.uk/complaints/>
- 22.2** Following on from this, in addition to the normal processes of candidate consultation, opportunities for feedback and measures for annual progress monitoring and assessment, Faculty procedures must include internal mechanisms, both informal and formal, for the handling, consideration and resolution of problems and issues that may be experienced by research candidates.
- 22.3** Faculty procedures should be clear, consistent, fairly applied and documented in accessible written form. They should be well understood by both staff and candidates. Candidates in particular should be made aware of the avenues of help and support that are open to them. Procedures should include clearly defined timescales to ensure the prompt resolution of problems and minimum disruption to the programme of research study.
- 22.4** Candidates should raise all issues concerning the progress and supervision of their programme of research study with their Director of Studies in the first instance. It is anticipated that in most cases this will be sufficient to resolve the problem to the satisfaction of all concerned.
- 22.5** Faculty procedures should recognise that on occasion there may be problems or issues regarding supervision which candidates feel unwilling or unable to raise with their Director of Studies, or problems that have not been satisfactorily resolved despite the best efforts of both supervisor and candidate. In such cases mechanisms should allow for sensitive and confidential consideration by an appropriate third party or intermediary, normally the Faculty Director of PGR.
- 22.6** The Executive Dean, or their nominee, will be the final arbitrator in all supervisory problems and after appropriate investigation and advice may ultimately require the appointment of replacement supervisors. Any changes to supervisory arrangements must be submitted to the Faculty Research Degrees Committee in accordance with the University's regulatory framework.

- 22.7** Where problems remain unresolved within a defined timescale, candidates and/or their supervisors should have recourse to the University's Complaints Procedures which includes formal Faculty procedures as stages 1 and 2 of the process.
- 22.8** Faculties should ensure that candidates are made aware of other sources of help, advice and guidance that are available to them within the University e.g. via Student Services.
- 22.9** Faculties must provide clear directions to official sources of information about University complaints and misconduct procedures.

23. APPLICATIONS FOR REVIEW OF DECISIONS OF EXAMINERS FOR RESEARCH DEGREES (APPEALS)

23.1 Applications for review of decisions of the examiners of research awards may only be made in accordance with the University's Academic Regulations.

23.2 Grounds for review (appeal) are laid out in full in Academic Regulations at Appendix H2, H27.4R. In summary, the only grounds for appeal are: *material and significant administrative error or other material irregularity such that the assessments were not conducted in accordance with the approved regulations for the module/award.*

It is not possible to apply for review on the basis of a disagreement with the academic judgement of the examiners.

23.3 It is the responsibility of Faculties to ensure that candidates receive adequate and timely information about the Institution's formal procedures for review and to provide clear direction to sources of official information.

23.4 The right to apply for review in accordance with academic regulations applies to all formal assessment during the candidate's registration for a research degree including the progression examination and any taught components.

24. RESEARCH MISCONDUCT AND ASSESSMENT OFFENCES

24.1 All allegations of research misconduct will be investigated in accordance with University procedure laid out at annex 8 of the UWE Code of Good Research Conduct see <http://rbi.uwe.ac.uk/researchgovernance.asp>. Any allegation regarding assessment offences within the context of a research candidate's work submitted for the required assessment for their award will be investigated under the relevant Academic regulations and procedures, in accordance with the University's published assessment offence policy, see <http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/aboutus/policies>.