

# Regulations for research degree programmes 2020/21

## Introduction

1. These regulations are the most important part of the University's information for research students. They set out requirements and expectations for the University's research degrees. Further information is available in the Research Degrees Student and Supervisor Handbook and on the University web pages, but in all cases these regulations take precedence.

## Admission, registration and fees

2. Students who are admitted to the University should complete registration prior to the start date specified in their offer letter. Students are not entitled to supervision or access to University facilities until registration has been completed. In all cases, students must have completed registration no later than two weeks after the specified start date.
3. The University reserves the right to withdraw the registration of students who have failed to disclose relevant information, or who have presented misleading or false information, in applying for a programme of study. The University also reserves the right to decline or withdraw the registration of students who do not hold the appropriate immigration status, or who fail to comply with the conditions of their visa.
4. Research degree students will abide by the principles of good research practice, as set out by the University in the Research Degrees Student and Supervisor Handbook and the Research Code of Conduct.
5. Students must register at the start of each subsequent year of their programme, unless suspension of studies has been approved in advance. In order to be eligible to register in subsequent years, students must have complied with the progression requirements of their programme.
6. Fees will be paid in accordance with the published schedule of fees which are set on the basis that students will pay the relevant fee for the expected period of study appropriate to the student's mode of registration and target exit award. Should studies continue beyond this period, a registration fee will be charged.
7. Where a student submits a thesis before the end of the expected period of study, they must make arrangements to pay any balance of fees owing for the expected period of study before the thesis may be examined.

## Accreditation of prior learning

8. A student may be permitted to transfer registration from a research degree programme at another recognised higher education institution in order to enter the MPhil or PhD programme at Abertay University. Such requests will be considered by the Research Degrees Assessment Panel, and where granted will be specified as completed years of full-time study, to allow entry with advanced standing to a specified stage of a programme.

## Programmes of study

9. The research degrees of the University are:

Doctor of Philosophy	PhD
Doctor of Business Administration	DBA
Master of Philosophy	MPhil
Master of Arts	MA
Master of Science	MSc
Master of Laws	LLM

10. The award of one of the Master's by Research degrees demonstrates a practical ability to undertake research studies, a systematic understanding of knowledge and a critical awareness of current problems and/or application of original thought.
11. The award of the Master of Philosophy demonstrates a systematic understanding of knowledge and a critical awareness of current problems and/or application of original thought, much of which is at or informed by the forefront of the field of study or area of professional practice.
12. The award of the Doctor of Philosophy demonstrates the main focus of the candidate's work to be their contribution to knowledge in their discipline or field, through original research, or the original application of existing knowledge or understanding.

### Mode of attendance, suspension and duration of study

13. Research students may be registered on a full-time or part-time basis. A student may apply to the Director of Student and Academic Services to transfer from full-time to part-time, or vice-versa, with a statement of support from their Principal Supervisor. Approval to change will depend on the appropriateness of the proposed mode of study for the student's programme of research, a compelling plan for completion of the programme of research, and visa status.
14. A student may apply to the Director of Student and Academic Services to suspend study for a period of up to 12 months. Suspension will be granted only in multiples of one month. Normally not more than 12 months' suspension in total will be granted during a student's period of study.
15. Where suspension is granted, a return to study date will be agreed. The student must register and resume their studies on that date; otherwise they will be withdrawn from study.
16. The maximum period of study, not including any approved suspension, in months for each award is:

Award	Minimum	Expected	Maximum
PhD full-time	24	36	48
MPhil full-time	12	24	36
MbR full-time	10	12	14
PhD part-time	48	72	96
MPhil part-time	24	48	72
MbR part-time	20	24	28

17. The Director of Student and Academic Services may permit a student to register for a full-time PhD where the expected and maximum period of study are both set at 48 months, in cases where the funding body requires this to be the case, owing to the nature of the proposed programme of research, and provides funding to support an extended period of full-time training.
18. Where a student transfers between full-time and part-time modes of study the maximum period of study will be calculated on a pro-rata basis.
19. The maximum period of study will be reduced to take account of each year of advanced standing granted in recognition of prior learning.
20. A candidate who is a previous graduate or a current member of staff of the University, or who has a relevant academic connection to the University, may be permitted to register for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by published work. In such cases, the candidate must provide evidence of having authored a minimum of six peer-reviewed refereed publications. In such cases, the expected period of study is one year full-time, or two years part-time, to produce a sustained narrative that integrates the published research, through coherent theoretical and methodological evaluation, as an original and independent contribution to knowledge.
21. In exceptional circumstances, the Director of Student and Academic Services, consulting as appropriate with members of the Research Degrees Assessment Panel, may recommend to Senate that the maximum period of enrolment for an individual student be extended.
22. Postgraduate research students will normally pursue their programme of study and research at Abertay University. *The Director of Student and Academic Services may exceptionally permit a candidate to pursue the whole or part of their research programme off-campus, providing that appropriate supervisory arrangements have been made, that the student has access to appropriate research facilities and engages in appropriate researcher development and training, and that the student will abide by all other regulatory process herein.*

## Supervision of research students

23. All research students will have a supervisory team to guide their researcher development and training, and to provide an oversight of their programme of research. Supervisory teams will have expertise of the field of the proposed research and appropriate supervisory experience and training. Supervisory teams will comprise a minimum of two and normally two or three permanent staff members of the University. The Dean of Research and the Graduate School may permit appointment of additional supervisors, on a case by case basis. Further information on the composition of supervisory teams is available in the Research Degrees Student and Supervisor Handbook.
24. The prospective supervisory team and the student learning environment will be considered and approved by the Dean of School. No applicant will be offered a place as a research student without prior approval of appropriate supervisory arrangements.
25. The Principal Supervisor will have overall responsibility for monitoring the progress of the research student and ensuring that the student has regular supervisory support, but other members of the supervisory team are expected to be involved regularly in meetings.
26. Supervisory teams may not be changed without the approval of the Dean of School.

27. Additional subject experts may contribute to the work of the supervisory team as advisors, but these advisors will not have any formal responsibility for the support or training of the student.

## Training and development

28. The research degree programmes provide students with both generic and specialist research training. During their period of study, students will record their progress against the skills identified in a Professional Development Portfolio (PDP) record. Progress with the University's research training requirements will be assessed, through review of the PDP record, at regular intervals during the period of study. Progress with specialist research training will be assessed by the supervisory team during regular progress reports on each student's specific project.
29. The student may only progress to *viva voce* examination for the target award once their PDP record has been judged by the Research Degrees Assessment Panel to evidence satisfactory generic and specialist research skills training. Failure of the PDP record to evidence satisfactory training will require the student to provide additional evidence as requested by the Dean of Research and the Graduate School.

## Progression and engagement

30. Each student is expected to meet with their supervisory team as frequently as required for their research project, but at least monthly. A record of each meeting should be made in PReSS within 7 days of the date of the meeting.
31. An application for ethical approval of the proposed research project must be submitted within 2 months of a student's registration date for Master's by Research or Master of Philosophy, and within 6 months of the registration date for Doctor of Philosophy.
32. The progress of students will be assessed formally by an Annual Progression Review. These reviews will contain an assessment of progress towards the targets agreed for the research programme, and the student's engagement with the programme of formal research training offered by the relevant School and the University's Graduate School.
33. A formal Annual Progression Review will be held for each student after 10 months' study and annually thereafter. The Annual Progression Review may recommend any of the following to the Director of Student and Academic Services :
  - (a) To note satisfactory progress towards the student's intended qualification aim;
  - (b) At the year 1 review for a full-time student, or the year 2 review for a part-time student, to confirm progression as a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (including transfer from Master of Philosophy or Master's by Research as appropriate);
  - (c) Where sufficient progress has not been made, to transfer registration from Doctor of Philosophy to Master of Philosophy, or from Master of Philosophy to Master's by Research;
  - (d) Where satisfactory progress has not been made, to require the student to withdraw from the research degree programme;
  - (e) In exceptional circumstances, to defer a decision, once only, for up to 3 months.In the case of recommendations under (c) and (d) above, the Director of Student and Academic Services will convene a meeting of at least three members of the Research Degrees Assessment Panel to consider the recommendation.

34. The Research Degrees Assessment Panel may also set additional requirements of the student or supervisory team in relation to any concerns that may impede satisfactory progress.
35. Where the student's registration is transferred for any reason, the maximum permitted period of registration for the new qualification aim will apply, and the period of registered study prior to transfer will count towards the maximum period of registration.
36. Where the student has not completed within the maximum permitted period of registration for the new target award, the approval of Senate must be sought, on the recommendation of the Research Degrees Assessment Panel, and if approved, a final completion date agreed.
37. Progression is overseen by the Research Degrees Assessment Panel. A student has the right of appeal against a decision of the Research Degrees Assessment Panel, in line with the Academic Appeals Procedures.

### **Submission and examination of thesis**

38. Guidance on the procedures for preparing and submitting the thesis to Academic Registry are contained in the Research Degrees Student and Supervisor Handbook.
39. If subject area guidelines exist, concerning thesis word limits or portfolios of evidence, these should be clearly set out in a (subject) discipline handbook, approved by the Research Degrees Assessment Panel and included as an Appendix to the Research Degrees Student and Supervisor Handbook.
40. The thesis and any accompanying publications will be in English. Candidates may not submit work in any other language.
41. A thesis may not include any work that has been submitted for another award, either at the Abertay University or elsewhere.
42. A student may not submit a thesis for examination before the expiration of the minimum period of registration, or after the expiration of the maximum period of registration, without the prior approval of Senate.
43. The thesis will be assessed by an oral examination, conducted by an examining panel (*viva voce*).
44. Students must submit a body of work for examination. This may comprise a thesis that embodies the results of the completed research, or it may comprise a portfolio of creative works accompanied by a thesis. The portfolio may include previously published work, performances, creative artefacts, narratives and exhibitions of creative work or similar.
45. The thesis submitted for the degree of PhD by published work must include copies of a minimum of 6 peer-reviewed refereed publications. The publications must be linked by a sustained narrative that integrates the published research, through coherent theoretical and methodological evaluation, as an original and independent contribution to knowledge.
46. The Examining Panel, and a non-examining Chair, will be appointed by the Dean of Research and the Graduate School, who may confer with a selection of independent members of the Research Degrees Assessment Panel if any advice or confirmation is required. On the recommendation of the Dean of School, they will appoint an External Examiner, and an Internal Examiner who is an appropriately qualified academic within the University who has not been involved in supervising the candidate. If the candidate is also a member of staff of the University, a second External Examiner shall be appointed. The Dean of Research and the Graduate School may at their discretion appoint additional Examiners in order to ensure adequate expertise in the Examining Panel.

47. Each Examiner will read and examine the thesis and submit an independent written report in advance of the oral examination. The Examiners may not confer before submission of these reports, and in no circumstances may an oral examination be held until all independent written reports are received. The reports will be made available to the members of the Examining Panel. Candidates are not entitled to receive copies of the reports prior to the oral examination.
48. A Candidate or member of their supervisory team may not have any contact, regarding the thesis or examination, with an External Examiner between their appointment and the *viva voce*.
49. The Examining panel for submissions for research degrees that include creative works or performances will be exposed to the creative works prior to the *viva voce*.
50. The oral examination will be conducted in English. Candidates may not be accompanied by a translator, nor use a dictionary or translation device during the examination.
51. One member of the candidate's supervisory team may attend the *viva voce* at the invitation of the candidate. Supervisors do not have independent rights of attendance, and any such attendee may not participate in the discussions unless explicitly invited to do so by the Chair of the Examining Panel. The Chair of the Examining Panel may, at any time, require the attending supervisor to withdraw.
52. At the end of the oral examination, the examiners will be required to confer and to reach a unanimous opinion. The Chair of the Examining Panel may indicate informally to the candidate the decision of the examiners at the end of the *viva voce* or subsequently, but must make clear that the final decision rests with the University. The examiners will, under the guidance of the Chair of the Examining Panel, prepare a joint written report that specifies the outcome of the examination process. The report should contain the decision of the Panel, and where any modifications to the thesis are required, a complete list and rationale for the requested revisions.
53. The Examining Panel may make one of the following recommendations:-
  - (a) That the thesis be accepted as presented, and that the candidate be approved for the award.
  - (b) That the thesis be accepted subject to *minor modifications*, and that the candidate be approved for the award subject to these modifications being made in a satisfactory manner within one month of the *viva voce*.
  - (c) That the thesis be accepted subject to *modifications*, and that the candidate be approved for the award subject to these modifications being made in a satisfactory manner within four months of the *viva voce*.
  - (d) That the thesis requires *major modifications*, and that the work be re-examined when these modifications have been made by a specified date within twelve months of the *viva voce*. This recommendation is available only for MPhil or PhD.
  - (e) That in the case of candidates for the award of PhD, the thesis and research work is of insufficient scope or level for a doctorate, but that the candidate be awarded an MPhil. Only minor modifications may be required when this recommendation is made.
  - (f) That in the case of candidates for the award of MPhil, the thesis and research work is of insufficient scope or level for the MPhil, but that the candidate be awarded a Master's by Research. Only minor modifications may be required when this recommendation is made.
  - (g) That the candidate has failed to satisfy the examining panel and that no award be made.

54. In cases where the Examiners fail to reach agreement on a recommendation, the Chair should seek to achieve consensus. Only in those cases where no resolution can be found, should the Chair seek further expert advice within the discipline.
55. The recommendation of the Examiners will be considered by the Director of Student and Academic Services. In the case of recommendations under (e), (f) or (g) above, the Director of Student and Academic Services will convene a meeting of at least three members of the Research Degrees Assessment Panel to consider the recommendation. The outcome of the oral examination will then be communicated to the student by Registry.

### **Modifications and re-examination**

56. The classifications of minor modifications, modifications, and major modifications are defined in the Research Degrees Student and Supervisor Handbook.
57. Where a thesis requires minor modifications the revised work must be submitted within one month of the date of the *viva voce*. The Chair of the Examining Panel and the Internal Examiner will scrutinise the revisions. If the modifications are satisfactory, then the Chair of the Examining Panel will notify the Director of Student and Academic Services, and recommend the candidate for the award.
58. Where a thesis requires modifications the revised work must be submitted within four months of the date of the *viva voce*. The Chair of the Examining Panel with the External Examiner and the Internal Examiner will scrutinise the revisions, unless the External Examiner has agreed that they may be scrutinised by the Chair and the Internal Examiner only. If the modifications are satisfactory, then the Chair of the Examining Panel will notify the Director of Student and Academic Services, and recommend the candidate for the award.
59. Where a thesis requires major modifications, the revised work must be submitted by the specified date, which will be within 12 months of the date of the *viva voce*, and the work will be re-examined by the original panel. An alternative Examiner may be appointed only where a member of the original panel is no longer available. The Chair of the Examining Panel with the External Examiner and Internal Examiner will scrutinise the revisions. The Examining Panel may require that a second oral examination is held. If the modifications are satisfactory, then the Chair of the Examining Panel will notify the Director of Student and Academic Services, and recommend the candidate for the award. Only one re-examination will be permitted, and at this stage any modifications required by the Examining Panel may only be minor modifications, whether for the intended award or a lower award. Such minor modifications must be completed within one month of the re-examination, and will be scrutinised by the Chair of the Examining Panel and the Internal Examiner, in line with regulation 57 above.
60. The periods for re-submission apply equally to all candidates, regardless of mode of study.