RESEARCH DEGREES
QUALITY CODE
2018-19
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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

This Code sets out the University of Dundee’s standards and requirements for the quality of research degree provision – including academic standards, support standards and mandatory procedures on monitoring, training, supervision, assessment and examination.

Among its purposes are: (i) to help clarify correct procedures at the various milestones of the research degree, (ii) to help Schools quality assure each aspect of their research degrees, and (iii) to inform enhancement and improvement activities across the University.

This Code complements existing regulations and guidance and should be used in conjunction with the applicable degree regulations and in the context of the University’s Quality Framework.

Sources of further information, help and advice appear at the end of each section.

The University offers a number of research degrees in addition to the traditional PhD including research masters degrees and professional doctorates. Each will have its own degree regulations that specify elements in the programme that differ from the traditional PhD – apart from these elements any reference to PhD in this code can be taken to refer to all research degrees offered by the University.

Relationship with the Quality Code for Higher Education

The Code takes account of the Quality Code for Higher Education (2017 version), which was the definitive reference point for all UK higher education providers. Chapter B11 of the Quality Code on research degrees sets out the following expectation:

Research degrees are awarded in a research environment that provides secure academic standards for doing research and learning about research approaches, methods, procedures and protocols. This environment offers students quality of opportunities and the support they need to achieve successful academic, personal and professional outcomes from their research degrees.

The QAA Quality Expectation for Research Degrees
Indicators of Sound Practice

Chapter B11 also sets out 18 indicators of ‘sound practice’. These indicators are set out in this Code (in blue text) as an aid to understanding the University’s own requirements. They do not, however, represent the limits to the University’s commitment to excellence in the quality of its research degrees - we can and should aim higher.

To assist in this each section will have an “Enhancement Tip” insert that draws on recent case studies of activities where enhancement has been an important motivation – as a way of sharing best practice in research degrees programme quality enhancement.

Enhancement Tips

Recent examples of activities where enhancement has been an important motivation – as a way of sharing best practice in research degrees programme quality enhancement.
Indicator 1
Higher education providers that are research degree awarding bodies have regulations for research degrees that are clear and readily available to research students and staff, including examiners. Where appropriate, regulations are supplemented by similarly accessible, subject-specific guidance at the level of the faculty, school, department, research centre or research institute.

Indicator 2
Higher education providers develop, implement and keep under review codes of practice for research degrees, which are widely applicable and help enable the higher education provider meet the Expectation of this Chapter. The codes are readily available to all students and staff involved in research degrees, and written in clear language understood by all users.

Indicator 3
Higher education providers monitor their research degree provision against internal and external indicators and targets that reflect the context in which research degrees are being offered.

Enhancement Tip – Indicator 1 -
ESW produce a research degree student handbook that is emailed to all students when they first matriculate. It is revised annually and includes both generic and programme specific information.

Enhancement Tip – Indicator 2
The University Strategy includes a commitment to improving research student support; it will also monitor admissions, retention and completion rates – including performance against the expectation of PhD completion within 4 years.
CHAPTER 2: ADMISSIONS & INDUCTION

SECTION 2.1: RESEARCH DEGREE ADMISSIONS

Quality Indicator 4
Higher education providers accept research students only into an environment that provides support for doing and learning about research, and where excellent research, recognised by the relevant subject community, is occurring.

Quality Indicator 5
Higher education providers' admissions procedures for research degrees are clear, consistently applied and demonstrate equality of opportunity.

Quality Indicator 6
Only appropriately qualified and prepared applicants are admitted to research degree programmes. Admissions decisions involve at least two members of the higher education provider’s staff who have received training and guidance for the selection and admission of research degree students. The decision-making process enables the higher education provider to assure itself that balanced and independent admissions decisions have been made in accordance with its admissions policy.

Research Degree admissions fall within the scope of the University's Fair Admissions Policy.

Most applications can be made on-line via the UKPASS system although Schools may require applicants to make an initial application directly to the School - when recruiting to funded studentships, for example.

The normal entry requirement for a research degree is a 2:1 honours degree or equivalent and/or a relevant master's degree or equivalent. Schools may also admit students on the basis of experiential or other learning (APEL or APL). The normal entry requirements for each School must be published and made available to potential applicants (in the University's on-line prospectus, for example).

Admission procedures may also include a formal or informal interview, qualifying examination or a requirement to undertake preparatory research training or English language courses.

Admissions decisions will typically need to take account of the following:

- The applicant’s academic history and qualifications;
- The scope and potential of the proposed research project;
The availability of academic expertise and supervision;

The availability of resources and equipment to support the project.

The choice of research topics for applicants is likely to be constrained by the availability of relevant academic expertise within the School and in some cases by the nature of studentships being offered. A reasonably developed research proposal must be agreed between the student and the School to allow for informed decisions to be made at the appropriate time. Where flexibility is required or desirable in the initial stages of study then offers for admission can be made on this basis - so long as it is clear to the student when and how a final choice of topic is to be made.

The rejection of applicants must be based on clear and objective grounds, handled with sensitivity and should ideally include constructive feedback to the applicant, although the volume of applications in some areas may preclude this.

All courses at the University of Dundee are taught in English and all applicants who are non-native speakers of English must be able to provide certificated evidence of English language skills - the normal minimum entry level of English is 6.5 at IELTS or equivalent although Schools may set entry levels higher than this for particular disciplines. Non-EU students who require a Visa for study in the UK must provide evidence of English language skills to the minimum level to satisfy UK immigration regulations.

The decision to admit is taken by the Dean on behalf of the School Board on the advice of relevant tutors, supervisors and programme leaders. Some Schools may require the decision to be approved by a separate committee before formal endorsement by the Dean.

The formal offer of admission to a candidate must include all relevant details of the proposed course of study including duration and fees payable, and must indicate clearly any conditions attached to the offer.

The University will consider applications from candidates who wish to study at a distance, possibly in collaboration with other institutions, on a case by case basis. Admission will only be offered on this basis if the University is satisfied that the student will have access to similar levels of support and supervision as on-campus research students. All collaborative provision is subject to University's quality assurance procedures.

Enhancement Tip – Indicator 6

The UKPASS admissions system provides automatic checking of some admissions criteria but some Schools also use eVision for on-line collaborative selection. The decision to reject or make an offer of admission is confirmed by each Dean after due consideration by the proposed supervisors.
CHAPTER 2: ADMISSIONS & INDUCTION

SECTION 2.2: INDUCTION

Quality Indicator 7

Higher education providers define and communicate clearly the responsibilities and entitlements of students undertaking research degree programmes.

Quality Indicator 8

Research students are provided with sufficient information to enable them to begin their studies with an understanding of the environment in which they will be working.

Each School must organise an induction event or programme of events for new research students annually, normally at the start of the academic year.

New research students must be fully briefed on: the responsibilities of supervisors and the expectations of research students, the research and generic skills training available, research ethics (where relevant), library, IT and student support resources, teaching/demonstrating opportunities, and the PhD upgrade and thesis monitoring arrangements.

All students must be made aware of the function of the Thesis Monitoring Committee and how they can raise any issue concerning its effective operation with the Programme Leader or equivalent in the School.

Each School must produce dedicated information for new research students, which must include reference to this Code and relevant University's policies and procedures - including health and safety and equality and diversity.

Each School must ensure that contact between new research students and their supervisors is made as soon as possible after matriculation.

Each School should consider allocating a senior research student to each new entrant - to act as an informal contact/mentor within the School for the initial period of induction and orientation.

New research students should be encouraged to attend any relevant University, DUSA or student society induction event.

Student Services must inform all new research students of the requirement to matriculate in person, with documentary evidence of identity, funding and, for non-EU students,
immigration status. School induction programmes must be arranged so as to allow for matriculation at the correct time and location.

**Enhancement Tip – Indicator 8**

Some Schools issue a checklist to new research students – to ensure that the student knows the various induction events and services available to them on campus – and has a way of following up if some aspects of induction are missed – especially in lab-based disciplines where floor level orientation is essential.

**CHAPTER 3: SUPERVISION**

**Indicator 9**

Higher education providers appoint supervisors with the appropriate skills and subject knowledge to support and encourage research students, and to monitor their progress effectively.

**Indicator 10**

Each research student has a supervisory team containing a main supervisor who is the clearly identified point of contact.

**Indicator 11**

Higher education providers ensure that the responsibilities of research student supervisors are readily available and clearly communicated to supervisors and students.

**Indicator 12**

Higher education providers ensure that individual supervisors have sufficient time to carry out their responsibilities effectively.
SECTION 3.1: APPOINTMENT OF SUPERVISORS

THE SUPERVISING TEAM
Each student must have (at least) two supervisors: (at least) one main supervisor and a second supervisor.

Supervisors are appointed by Deans, subject to confirmation by School Board.

In appointing supervisors Deans must ensure that the University and School criteria for the appointment of supervisors are met and that no member of staff acts as the main supervisor for more than six full-time students or equivalent at any one time.

Main and Second supervisors must meet the School criteria for accredited supervisor status. Students might also be allocated associate supervisors who are under mentoring by a fully accredited supervisor.

Only those who hold a remunerated or honorary appointment at lecturer level or above in the University may be appointed as supervisors and at least one of the main supervisors must be a full member of University staff.

ACCREDITATION
Each School must agree and publish clear criteria for the accreditation of supervisors. The University’s model set of criteria is included in Appendix 1 of this Code. The criteria must include a requirement to engage with the University’s professional development and training for research supervisors provided through Organisational & Professional Development (OPD) and the Academic Skills Centre (ASC).

JOINT SUPERVISION/ CO-SUPERVISION
A student may be assigned more than one main supervisor (joint or co-supervision), especially in cases where more than one School is supporting the research project.

In all cases of joint supervision across Schools or disciplines the percentage split of duties between the supervisors must be agreed and recorded on an annual basis and made clear to the student concerned.

EXTERNAL SUPERVISORS
On very rare occasions it may be necessary to appoint an external expert to act as a supervisor. Deans have the authority to make such appointments but must ensure that external supervisors meet the School criteria for accredited supervisor status. Schools are responsible for all related contractual and remuneration matters.
SECTION 3.2: RESPONSIBILITIES OF MAIN SUPERVISORS

Main supervisors are responsible, in consultation with second supervisors, for
(a) giving guidance about:

- the nature of research
- the standard expected
- the planning of the research programme
- requisite research methods
- relevant regulations governing research at the University (e.g. research ethics, health and safety)
- appropriate publication practice and research data management;

(b) making clear to PhD candidates that, while the course of study for that degree constitutes training in research methods, the degree is awarded only for original work;

(c) meeting with full-time students at least fortnightly during the first three months of the research degree programme or project. Thereafter meetings must take place at least monthly. Meetings will normally be confined to the main supervisor and the student but a meeting between both supervisors and the student must take place at least once a semester. Meetings with part-time students must take place at least monthly during the first three months and at two-monthly intervals thereafter;

(d) recording the substantive outcomes of all scheduled supervision meetings or ensuring that the record of outcomes are compiled by the student and countersigned by the supervisors;
(e) giving specific advice on the necessary rates of progress of successive stages of the work so that the whole may be submitted within the scheduled time;

(f) requesting written work as appropriate, and returning such work with constructive feedback in good time;

(g) coordinating the Upgrade Review at the end of the first year of study and the subsequent Annual Progress Reviews;

(h) working alongside OPD, ASC and LLC staff to support students in their transferable skills training;

(i) ensuring that the student presents his/her work in local seminars and meets with the thesis monitoring committee as required;

(j) ensuring that the student is made aware of inadequacy of progress or of standards of work below those generally expected and arranging any supportive or ameliorative action necessary;

(k) ensuring, within the limits of available resources, that the School provides adequate accommodation and equipment for the student;

(l) ensuring that a completed 'intention to submit' pro forma is submitted to the Registry at least three months before the planned date of the student’s viva voce examination; and

(m) making use of relevant staff development and quality enhancement opportunities as an integral part of their duties as a supervisor.

SECTION 3.3: RESPONSIBILITIES OF SECOND SUPERVISORS

Second supervisors are expected to take an active interest in the student’s progress, and to provide additional support whenever this is required. The role of the second supervisor may, in addition, include any of the responsibilities of the main supervisor, but where the second supervisor takes on any of the main supervisor’s responsibilities this must be clearly recorded. Where the main supervisor becomes unavailable for whatever reason, or leaves the University, the second supervisor is expected to act in their place until such time as a new main supervisor is appointed. These are minimum requirements and it is open to Schools to further specify the role and responsibilities of second supervisors.
SECTION 3.4: RESPONSIBILITIES OF STUDENTS

The responsibilities of students include but are not confined to:

(a) accepting ultimate responsibility for their own academic work, the development of their own original research and their own progress towards submission for the degree;

(b) ensuring that they are familiar with relevant aspects of the University’s regulations, including degree regulations, policies on plagiarism and academic dishonesty, research ethics, health and safety;

(c) participating in relevant training programmes, including research integrity training;

(d) undertaking two weeks of generic skills training per year:
   (Students are strongly advised to discuss their workshop choices with their supervisors);

(e) agreeing a schedule of meetings (at least monthly for full time students) with their supervisors and attending those meetings;

(f) discussing with their supervisors the type of guidance and comment they find most helpful;

(g) taking the initiative in raising problems or difficulties, however elementary they may seem with their supervisors or the research postgraduate adviser;

(h) maintaining progress on their research in accordance with the timetable agreed with their supervisors including, in particular, submitting written material where required in sufficient time to allow for comments and discussion before embarking on the next stage of their research;

(i) keeping a record of meetings with their supervisors, which should include a note of items for action;

(j) providing as required, brief formal reports to the Thesis Monitoring Committee, with the assistance of their research supervisors;

(k) deciding when they wish to submit their thesis for examination, taking account of the views of their supervisors (which are advisory only); and

(i) completing, in agreement with their supervisor, the Thesis Deposit Agreement and archiving in Discovery the final examined copy of their thesis.

SECTION 3.5: RESEARCH POSTGRADUATE ADVISERS

Schools must appoint a research postgraduate adviser, coordinator or contact to whom students can turn for advice and information on any aspect of the research degree programme, including supervision, thesis monitoring, upgrade review, intention to submit and final submission. The full range of duties will vary from School to School but must be complementary to existing supervision and thesis monitoring arrangements. A list of
advisers will be maintained centrally and published on the University’s web pages for reference.

**SECTION 3 links for further information:**

Responsible Research: Managing health & safety in research:  
http://www.ucea.ac.uk/en/publications/index.cfm/mhandsr
CHAPTER 4: PROGRESS & REVIEW

Indicator 13

Higher education providers put in place clearly defined mechanisms for monitoring and supporting research student progress, including formal and explicit reviews of progress at different stages. Research students, supervisors and other relevant staff are made aware of progress monitoring mechanisms, including the importance of keeping appropriate records of the outcomes of meetings and related activities.

SECTION 4.1 THESIS MONITORING COMMITTEES

All Schools must establish a Thesis Monitoring Committee (or Committees). The primary purpose of the Committee is to provide an independent assessment of the progress of research students and the quality of their research supervision. Where the requirements of supervision and thesis monitoring exceed the capacity of a discipline or unit, thesis monitoring must be carried out at School level.

Meetings of the Committee also provide an opportunity for students to draw attention to any difficulties that may have arisen in the student-supervisor relationship.

Powers of Thesis Monitoring Committees

Thesis Monitoring Committees are responsible for (i) providing an assessment of the student’s progress and their readiness for Upgrade Review; and for (ii) providing an assessment of the student’s supervision arrangements.

In exceptional circumstances a Thesis Monitoring Committee might also recommend changes to the research project, research methodology or supervisory arrangements; downgrade the students registration (i.e. from PhD to MPhil); or to terminate the student’s studies.

Composition

The Committee must consist of at least two members of academic staff other than the student’s supervisor. At least one member of the Committee must have accredited supervisor status.
The Committee need not contain a member of academic staff with expertise in the student's field of research, since the committee's role is primarily concerned with progress issues and whether the student-supervisor relationship is operating successfully.

The Committee composition should allow for continuity of support where possible and not constituted in an entirely ad hoc way.

**Monitoring of individual student’s progress**

The Committee must consider the progress of full-time students at least twice a year and the progress of part-time students at least once a year – although Schools are encouraged to scheduled additional meetings as required.

Individual student’s progress must continue to be monitored until the student has submitted his/her thesis.

**Attendance of supervisors**

A student’s main supervisor would not normally attend the meetings between the student and the committee, but may attend if required, entirely at the committee’s discretion.

**Record of meetings**

The School must maintain a record of meetings of the Committee – including a note of agreed actions points and any advice or recommendations made (in confidence or otherwise) to the student or supervisors.

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**Enhancement Tip – Indicator 13**

A number of Schools hold an annual Research Student Symposium where all research students are expected to present some aspect of their research to their peers in an informal and supportive setting. This requirement is known from the start of the programme and acts as an additional checkpoint on the research students’ progress.

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**SECTION 4.2 UPGRADE REVIEW**

**Confirmation of Registration for a Research Degree: Upgrade Review**

Students wishing to undertake research at the University are admitted in the first instance as 'research students'. In order to be admitted formally for candidacy to a named degree, research students must undergo an Upgrade Review at the end of the first year of study (or
equivalent for PT students or students taking a 4 year PhD Programme). Students must fulfil minimum criteria in order to pass the Upgrade Review.

These minimum criteria comprise: either a substantial written report or relevant body of work by the student: a presentation by the student at an appropriate forum of peers; and a recommendation from the Dean of School and/or the Thesis Monitoring Committee, as well as from the student’s main supervisor(s) that he/she is allowed to progress.

Individual Schools or Programmes may set additional criteria so long as students are informed about all the criteria in place when they start their studies.

Where satisfactory progress has not been made, the main supervisor(s) can recommend that the Upgrade be delayed for a specified period, or that the student be registered for a lower award than originally intended, or, where progress is particularly unsatisfactory, that the student’s registration be terminated. Decisions made by the School on the upgrade of research students may be subject to appeal under the Postgraduate Appeals Procedure.

SECTION 4.3 ANNUAL PROGRESS REVIEW

Each research student must re-matriculate at the start of each academic year using the eVision on-line system. The matriculation process will be enabled for each student only when satisfactory progress is reported by the School - on a broadly defined pass-proceed basis. Schools must arrange meetings of Thesis Monitoring Committees in good time to allow pass-proceed progression information to be confirmed for each research student before Matriculation Week (held in early September each year).

Schools are expected to define their own criteria for pass-proceed at the annual progress review prior to re-matriculation. The criteria could make reference to levels of attendance, participation in discipline specific research events or seminars, experimental, practical or data gathering work, written work or any other academic work needed to demonstrate project progress and engagement with the research degree programme.

Where a student’s progress is such that the Thesis Monitoring Committee and/or the main supervisor(s) have doubts about the student’s ability to complete the degree the matter must be reported to the Dean, together with a recommendation that either:

(i) the student be allowed to proceed to the next year of study subject to certain conditions being satisfied (for example: certain experimental work being concluded or written work submitted for review etc.) in accordance with an agreed timetable or

(ii) that the student's studies should be terminated due to unsatisfactory progress or failure to meet previously agreed conditions.

Students are able to appeal against a School’s decisions on their unsatisfactory progress under the Postgraduate Appeals Procedure (see Section 6.7).
SECTION 4 LINKS for further information

*Upgrade Review Flowchart (PDF)*

*Consultancy, Teaching and other Work by PhD Students (PDF)*
CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH & GENERIC SKILLS TRAINING

Indicator 14

Research students have appropriate opportunities for developing research, personal and professional skills. Each research student's development needs are identified and agreed jointly by the student and appropriate staff at the start of the degree; these are regularly reviewed and updated as appropriate.

SECTION 5.1 RESEARCH METHODS TRAINING

All research students must have reasonable access to research, professional and transferable skills training as an integral part of their research degree. Every research student must discuss their training and development needs with their supervisors and the Thesis Monitoring Committee at least once every academic year. Every student should be encouraged to identify any need for formal research methods training in order to successfully carry out their research project. In some disciplines it might be possible for research students to audit an existing research methods module. Other disciplines might provide practical training in the experimental stage of the project.

Some external funding bodies have expectations about the scope of the research training for the doctoral students that they support: the EPSRC, for example, requires that “students must receive in-depth, advanced research training, as well as developing a broad understanding of their subject area”.

Some disciplines may require successful completion of a taught research-training focused masters degree either before admission to a doctoral degree programme or as part of an integrated 1+3 programme. The first year of a 4-year PhD Programme would typically provide dedicated research skills training.

Enhancement Tip – Indicator 14

All Civil Engineering PhD students complete a 20 Credit module in Research Methods. This focuses on Literature Reviews, Planning Research, Statistics and Data Analysis and Communication Skills.
SECTION 5.2 GENERIC SKILLS TRAINING

5.2.1 Organisational and Professional Development (OPD) is a resource developed to help Postgraduate research students become more effective, efficient and confident as professionals and hence achieve key competencies for professional career development. OPD provides a dedicated programme of workshops for Postgraduate research students that are aligned with the Researcher Development Framework (RDF). These workshops are free of charge to research students who are strongly encouraged to take advantage of opportunities on offer. Places on courses can be booked directly from the OPD website www.dundee.ac.uk/opd/coursebookings.

All PGR students are required to undertake the equivalent of two weeks transferable skills training each year (inclusive of School based activities, conferences etc).

5.2.2 In addition all research students are required to undertake relevant research ethics and integrity training appropriate to their discipline.

SECTION 5.3 EMPLOYABILITY & CAREER PLANNING

All research students have access to the University’s Career Service who can assist postgraduate students with all aspects of career planning.

Research students should also be directed to the Researcher Development Framework (RDF) provided by Vitae as part of their work to support the professional and career development of postgraduate researchers in the UK.

SECTION 5 Links for further information

The ESRC funded National Centre for Research Methods (NCRM) provides training that is open to all UK PhD students in the social sciences: http://www.ncrm.ac.uk/training/

My Dundee (for access to the PDP tool): https://my.dundee.ac.uk/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp

Vitae (for access to the RDF): http://www.vitae.ac.uk/researchers/428241/Vitae-Researcher-Development-Framework.html

University Careers Service:
http://www.dundee.ac.uk/careers/
CHAPTER 6: SUBMISSION & EXAMINATION

SECTION 6.1 SUBMISSION TIMETABLE

The normal period of postgraduate research or course of study, calculated by reference to the number of consecutive years from first registration to submission of thesis or dissertation, is as follows:

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<th></th>
<th>PhD</th>
<th>MD</th>
<th>MPhil</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(i) for full-time candidates</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) for part-time candidates</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) for candidates permitted to undertake a combination of FT and PT studies</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
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Subject to the terms of the Degree Regulations, the maximum period of postgraduate research or course of study, calculated by reference to the number of consecutive years from first registration to submission of thesis or dissertation, is as follows:

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<th></th>
<th>PhD</th>
<th>MD</th>
<th>MPhil</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(i) for full-time candidates</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) for part-time candidates</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) for candidates permitted to undertake a combination of FT and PT studies</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, a full-time candidate who is permitted to transfer to part-time study within one year or less from the end of the period prescribed for full-time study is required to complete his or her work for the degree within that period.

The maximum period of study of a candidate who is required or permitted to transfer from a course of study or research for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy to a Master's degree course shall remain that of the former course.

Schools should encourage full-time PhD candidates to plan to submit at the end of three years, although four years is the permitted maximum.

Students will be required to pay a Continuation Fee (in addition to a Matriculation Fee) if
they do not submit at the end of the normal period of study for the degree. The Fee will be charged after 6 months of unauthorised non-submission – for Full Time PhD students this will be after 3.5 years and for Part Time PhD Students this will be after 5.5 years. The Fee is currently £250 and is charged to all students who fail to submit in accordance with the regulations above – so it is important for all students to plan their studies accordingly and to seek help and guidance if likely non-submission is caused by health or other personal circumstances.

Schools must provide research students with information on how and when they can apply for temporary breaks in study, extensions or discounts of time (based on health or personal circumstances) and how the School monitors attendance and sick-absence.

Research students are entitled to a minimum period of annual leave (in line with the statutory leave entitlement for full-time employees) of 28 days including public holidays, following consultation with their supervisors.

Research students are also entitled to sick leave, maternity or paternity leave and compassionate leave broadly in line with the provision (statutory or contractual) for University employees – however the terms of some externally funded studentships might limit or vary the payment of stipend during such leave.

SECTION 6.2 SUBMISSION OF THE THESIS FOR EXAMINATION

In the final stages of the research project all students must be provided with clear instructions on the required format of the thesis to be submitted for examination purposes - either by their main supervisor or by the Convener of the Examining Committee.

Normally, students will be required to prepare three loose-bound copies of their thesis for examination. One copy must be submitted to the Registry who will record the date of submission and send the thesis to the External Examiner.

Students should be advised never to send examination copies using the internal mail system and that a thesis is not considered submitted until the Registry receives a copy. The student should pass (by hand) the other two copies of the thesis to the Convener of the examining committee if known, otherwise to the Main Supervisor for onward distribution to the Convener and internal examiner.

A student may be required to submit his/her thesis in a digital format (normally as a PDF document) for examination purposes. Students must be informed of this requirement by their supervisory team in advance, normally when the student and supervisor complete the Intention to Submit form. The purpose of the Thesis Deposit Agreement is to ensure that the student and the supervisor have considered the access permissions they wish to grant to the final accepted version of the theses.
Students must be reminded that the examining process may be delayed if they have any outstanding debt to the University at the time of submission of the thesis.

SECTION 6.3 EXAMINING COMMITTEES: COMPOSITION, ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The Main Supervisor is responsible for ensuring that a completed Intention to Submit pro forma, including the Thesis Deposit Agreement, is completed and submitted via the Dean (and/or any other School committee as necessary) to the Registry at least three months before the planned date of the viva voce examination. The purpose of this pro forma, which the student must countersign, is to establish the proposed composition of the examining committee of the thesis and to allow the Convener of the Examination Committee to make arrangements in good time.

The composition of the Committee is approved by the Dean (or by a Higher Degrees Committee) on behalf of the School Board using the Intention to Submit Form.

6.3.1 The Examination Committee

Examinaing committees should normally consist of three members: a Convener, an internal examiner and an external examiner.

6.3.2 The Convener

The Convener of the Examining Committee is responsible for making all the necessary arrangements for the Examination and has the authority to take all decisions regarding the Examination so as to ensure both the highest academic standards and demonstrable fairness to the student being examined.

The Convener generally does not take an active role in the questioning and examination of the student, but as a member of the examining committee is nevertheless entitled to do so. The Convener must normally have served as an internal examiner on an examining committee on at least one previous occasion.

6.3.3 Internal Examiners

The internal members of the examining committee must be at least of lecturer or honorary lecturer status in the University. Retired members of staff are not normally eligible to act on examining committees, whether as convener, internal or external examiner.
The Dean of School is responsible for approving the composition of the Examining Committee on behalf of the School Board.

Deans must ensure that the Internal Examiner possesses a sufficiently scholarly status in the given subject area. The status of prospective external examiners should likewise be carefully considered before they are approached; external examiners must be experts in the field.

6.3.4 External Examiners

An informal approach to potential External Examiners can be made by the Main Supervisor or by other University staff as appropriate, but students should not be asked to contact potential examiners.

When the research degree student is a member of academic staff of the University (but to the exclusion of research assistants and research fellows on short-term contracts) two external examiners must be appointed. Research students with teaching, tutoring or demonstrating duties ancillary to their studies are not required to have two external examiners.

The external examiner(s) must be provided with a statement of what the University believes is appropriate for the award of a higher degree by research.

A former member of staff of the University will not be eligible for appointment as an external examiner within the first five years of leaving the University.

External Examiners should be selected on the basis of their expert knowledge and experience and their familiarity with the academic and professional standards underpinning doctoral level research. There is no general requirement for examiners to be currently employed in any particular sector or at any particular grade. The suitability for appointment as an examiner should be made on a case by case basis taking into account the nature and subject matter of the research thesis to be examined.

6.3.5 The Supervisors

Supervisors should not be members of the examining committee and should take no part in the examination process.

Supervisors may attend the viva voce as observers with the permission of the Examination Committee and the agreement of the student.
SECTION 6.4  THE VIVA VOCE EXAMINATION

Indicator 17

Research degree final assessment procedures are clear and are operated rigorously, fairly and consistently. They include input from an external examiner and are carried out to a reasonable timescale. Assessment procedures are communicated clearly to research students, supervisors and examiners.

Enhancement Tip – Indicator 17

Some Schools combine the Viva Voce Examination with a public presentation or pre-viva seminar by the degree candidate of their research. While not appropriate to all disciplines this approach enables the candidate to demonstrate their knowledge and to go into the examination confident in talking about their research.

The University's research degree regulations require that each student must submit to a viva voce examination and that this requirement shall only be waived in special circumstances with the express approval of the appropriate School Board. In this context “special circumstances” does not include the examiners regarding the thesis as being unequivocally acceptable.

The viva voce examination is part of the examination for a postgraduate research degree but not the whole of it; the remainder being mature reflection upon the thesis itself by the examiners over the period of time from its submission.

The aim of the viva voce examination is to provide an opportunity for the examiners to question the student on aspects of the thesis. It should be designed to elicit information on any or all of the following issues:

(a) explanation of the structure of the thesis;
(b) justification for the inclusion or exclusion of material;
(c) explanation for and justification of the use of particular research methods and techniques;
(d) defence of the originality of the thesis;
(e) clarification of any points of ambiguity within the thesis;
(f) justification for the conceptual approach taken in the thesis;
(g) the depth of knowledge of the contextual background to the subject of the thesis.

6.4.1 Before the Examination

Preliminary Examiners' Reports

Both the internal and the external examiners are required to submit preliminary reports on the thesis in advance of the oral examination. These are submitted directly to the Convener and the examiners should not confer before the Examination Committee meets. It is the Convener's role to ensure that differences of opinion are discussed and resolved satisfactorily at or immediately following the examination of the student.

Prior to the viva voce examination, the Convener is responsible for:

(a) informing the student of the membership of the examining committee;
(b) making sure that the student is aware of the agreed format of the Thesis for examination purposes;
(c) making all practical arrangements for the viva voce examination, including date, time and place, and any additional requirements of the relevant School;
(d) ensuring that the viva voce examination takes place within three months of the date of submission wherever possible;
(e) informing the student of the arrangements with generally at least four weeks' notice;
(f) receiving preliminary reports from both the internal and external examiners before the viva voce examination, and ensuring that issues raised in these reports are satisfactorily addressed during the viva voce examination;
(g) agreeing the structure of the examination with the other members of the committee, ensuring that all concerns raised by the examiners will be addressed.

6.4.2 Range of Outcomes of the Examination

The recommendation from an examining committee for a research degree will be one of the following typical outcomes (timescales are indicative and can be varied at the discretion of the committee):

A1 The Thesis is accepted unconditionally;
   The Thesis is accepted on the condition that either
A2 minor editorial corrections are completed within one month; Or
A3  minor revisions are completed within two months.
A4  That the thesis is not accepted but that the candidate is given the opportunity to rectify substantial deficiencies during a further period of supervised research and re-submit in a revised form within a stated period which should not normally exceed 12 months;
A5  The Thesis is not accepted and resubmission is not allowed.

6.4.3  After the Examination

At the end of the viva the student must be advised that the decision of the committee will be conveyed in writing by the Convener by a specified date or the student may be informed orally on the day of the viva.

In cases where there are substantial deficiencies in the thesis then it is preferable for the decision to be conveyed in writing, along with a written statement, agreed by the examiners, comprising the main comments upon which the re-submission is to be based.

In all cases, the Examiners' report proforma containing the recommendation of the examining committee must be forwarded to the Registry immediately following the viva voce.

The final examining committee report (not the reports of individual external examiners) is available to PhD students, on request, in the interests of transparency in examination procedures.

At the conclusion of the examination procedure, the Convener is responsible for:

(a) coordinating the preparation of the final examining committee's report, which is similar in content to the preliminary reports of the internal and external examiners, including the reconciliation of disagreements amongst members of the examining committee;

(b) notifying the student in writing of any required corrections, revisions or other amendments necessary to ensure that the thesis meets the requirements for the award of the degree;

(c) forwarding the final examining committee's recommendation contained in their final report to the Registry who will then arrange for that recommendation to be forwarded to the Senate via the Examinations Office. The Convener should at the same time forward the preliminary reports of both the external and internal examiners to the Registry;

(d) approving all minor corrections/revisions and certifying that the final thesis satisfies the requirements of the examiners.
Following the Senate's decision on the recommendations of the examiners the student must be notified formally by letter from the Registry.

6.4.4 Viva Examinations using video link (Skype or similar)

Viva examinations are normally held in Dundee with all parties present. In very exceptional circumstances the examination may be held by video link subject to the following conditions:

- The examination must be held on a maximum of two sites only.
- At least one examiner must be on the same site as the candidate.
- All parties must agree in writing with the arrangements prior to the examination.
- The technology and facilities used during the examination must be secure and reliable.
- The Examination must not be recorded.
- The Examination arrangements must be approved by Dean on behalf of the School Board.

SECTION 6.5 RE-SUBMISSIONS

In the case of a student required to revise and re-submit a thesis, the Convener must, upon resubmission by the student, consult the members of the examining committee as to whether there should be a second meeting of the committee and whether the student is required to submit to a second viva voce examination.

Whilst it is often the case that a viva voce examination is waived for resubmissions, students should not be led to expect this and should be prepared to submit to a second oral examination.

Students who are required to resubmit must pay a fee at the time of re-submission in line with University Ordinance. This fee must be paid whether or not a second viva voce examination takes place. Details of the current levels of fees (revised from time to time) are available on-line from the Registry's webpages.

SECTION 6.6 DISAGREEMENTS AMONGST EXAMINERS

Where there is disagreement amongst members of the examining committee, the Convener is expected to clarify and, where possible, reconcile those differences. In the exceptional case of irreconcilable disagreement, each member of the committee shall submit a separate
report to the Director of Academic & Corporate Governance who will then refer the case to the Senate. Thereafter the Senate has the power to recommend to the Court the appointment of a further external examiner or examiners.

In addition, as the supreme academic body in the University, the Senate has the power to make such other decision as it deems appropriate in the particular circumstances.

**SECTION 6.7  APPEALS**

Students may appeal against the decisions of examining committees in accordance with the Postgraduate Appeal Procedure. Every appeal must be in writing and must be lodged with the University Secretary within four weeks of the date on which the candidate was informed of the decision against which the appeal is directed.

The Regulations relating to the postgraduate appeals procedure, including the criteria on which such appeals may be based, are available online. Assistance with the preparation of appeals may be obtained by consulting the Students' Assessor who may be contacted via Academic & Corporate Governance.

**SECTION 6.8  ARCHIVING OF FINAL VERSION**

Following successful completion of the examination students are required to archive, in approved format, an electronic copy of their final examined thesis. The electronic copy must be deposited in the institutional repository Discovery (http://discovery.dundee.ac.uk/) and may be embargoed for a default 12 month period.

The Thesis Deposit Agreement should be completed prior to archiving to allow the Library and Learning Centre (LLC) to confirm any restrictions with the supervisor. Supervisors may, at a later date, request a reasonable extension to the embargo.

Particular funders (e.g. RCUK) require that the thesis is made openly available within 12 months. Archiving in Discovery satisfies this criteria, and will be checked and validated by LLC staff before being made publicly available.

On-line Thesis Deposit Agreement:
https://www.dundee.ac.uk/library/research/theses/form/

LLC Webpages: https://www.dundee.ac.uk/library/research/theses/
SECTION 6 Links to further information

Intention to Submit Form available from https://www.dundee.ac.uk/registry/research-degrees/

LLC Support for Thesis Deposition - http://www.dundee.ac.uk/library/research/theses

Flowchart -: Submission to viva Examination

https://uod.box.com/s/szxg6nei76rl0cpqv3i77a9z2oavuoax

Flowchart: Viva Examination to Award

https://uod.box.com/s/948mxmm9jjblm12n7unrl3uu8sav7h1f

Form and Presentation of Theses for Higher Degrees

https://www.dundee.ac.uk/governance/university-calendar/higher-degree-general-regulations/theses/

Guidance on Viva Voce Examinations by Video Link

http://webstore.dundee.ac.uk/qf/Viva%20by%20Video%20Link.pdf

CHAPTER 7: QUALITY & GOVERNANCE

SECTION 7.1 ACADEMIC STANDARDS & QUALITY

Indicator 16
Higher education providers that are research degree awarding bodies use criteria for assessing research degrees that enable them to define their academic standards and the achievements of their graduates. The criteria used to assess research degrees are clear and readily available to research students, staff and examiners.

Enhancement Tip – Indicator 16
All research students must understand the degree regulations and the standards required for a research masters or doctoral degree. Some Thesis Monitoring Committees help students to understand how their research and final thesis will be assessed by indicating how work-in-progress submitted to the Committee compares to the standard required for that level of study.

The University of Dundee has fully implemented the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) for its academic awards and all research degrees are assessed and approved in the context of regulations that reflect the framework level descriptors – Level 11 for research masters degrees (MPhil, LLM (R), MLitt (R) & MSc(R) and Level 12 for doctoral degrees.

The PhD Degree regulations reflect the SCQF Level 12 descriptors and all doctoral candidates and supervisory team members must be aware of the assessment criteria for doctoral research degrees before undertaking research or supervision.

Extract from the PhD Regulations:

The Degree is granted upon the basis of satisfying all of the following characteristic outcomes:

- The creation and interpretation of new knowledge and understanding, through original research, or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication.

- A systematic acquisition, understanding and interpretation of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice.
• The general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline.

• An appropriate level of understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.

SECTION 7.2 EVALUATION

Indicator 15
Higher education providers put in place mechanisms to collect, review and respond as appropriate to evaluations from those concerned with research degrees, including individual research students and groups of research students or their representatives. Evaluations are considered openly and constructively and the results are communicated appropriately.

Enhancement Tip – Indicator 15

Many Schools use their regular postgraduate seminar sessions as an opportunity for research students to provide informal feedback and to raise any issues of general concern. All Schools will include a postgraduate student representative in the more formal School Board meetings to enable open and constructive discussions on student concerns.

The University of Dundee participates in the national Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) run by the Higher Education Academy. All current research students must be given the opportunity to participate in the survey.

The purpose of the survey is to gather information on how well Dundee University performs in relation to the experience of its research students. The Research Degree Sub-Committee will consider the results of this survey annually to make improvements to postgraduate research programmes. The results of this annual survey will be made available on the University's website.
SECTION 7.3 STUDENT REPRESENTATION

The University works closely with DUSA to enhance postgraduate student representation.

Schools must promote and engage with research student representation, via forums such as:

- staff-student liaison committees
- School and University level committees and their working groups
- PGR programme review boards and PSRB accreditation events

Schools must encourage research student representatives to contribute fully to such forums and assist in the training of representatives where appropriate.

SECTION 7.4 STUDENT COMPLAINTS

Indicator 18

Higher education providers put in place and promote independent and formal procedures for dealing with complaints and appeals that are fair, clear to all concerned, robust, and applied consistently. The acceptable grounds for complaints and appeals are clearly defined.

Enhancement Tip – Indicator 18

The University of Dundee has a well-established and highly effective mediation service – Early Dispute Resolution (EDR) that can assist staff and students in anticipating, avoiding, preventing and resolving disputes. All research students, supervisors and members of Thesis Monitoring Committees should be made aware of the service and encouraged to make use of it at the earliest possible stage of a dispute.

The University of Dundee Complaints Handling Procedure aims to provide an accessible, quick, straightforward and informal method of resolving student complaints, with the option of a more formal, written, procedure in serious cases after all efforts for local resolution have been tried.

If formal resolution is not possible then students have the right to apply to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.
All University of Dundee students are entitled to use the procedure without concern that they will be disadvantaged by complaining. It is anticipated that no costs will be incurred by students in raising complaints. Due regard to privacy, confidentiality and the interests of any third parties will be borne in mind as appropriate.

SECTION 7.5 RESEARCH ETHICS AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Ethical conduct in research demands respect for the rights of others who are directly or indirectly affected by the research. Procedures must be in place at the School level to help research students comply with principles of ethical research and all legal requirements associated with a piece of research.

In general any research that involves human participation should be on the basis of fully informed consent and participants' rights of privacy should be guaranteed. Researchers should consider all ethical ramifications of their research and the physiological, psychological, social, political, religious, cultural and economic consequences of the work on participants. Where the researcher is not sufficiently informed to make a fair judgment, specialist advice must be sought.

Occasionally potential conflicts of interest may arise in the management of research students and Schools must have in place procedures that allow for sensitive but robust examination of potential conflicts. Schools must establish guidelines on how to resolve potential problems in such areas as prior or ongoing personal relationships between staff and students, members of staff who undertake research degrees and the independence of external examiners.

SECTION 7.6 PLAGIARISM & ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

The University has clear policy and regulations on plagiarism and academic fraud (available on-line at http://www.dundee.ac.uk/governance/policies/#lp).

Students must be informed that plagiarism detection software will be used by the Supervisory Team and by the Examiners, in accordance with the regulations, to help guard against academic dishonesty.

SECTION 7 Links to further information

SCQF – Level 11 and 12 http://www.scqf.org.uk/features/Framework.htm
UK HE International Unit - Bologna Process http://international.ac.uk/policy/ehea-bologna-process.aspx
Postgraduate Research Experience Survey – HEA http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/pres
Student Matters - Representation http://www.dundee.ac.uk/qf/studentengagement/studentrepresentation/
Appendix 1

Research Student Supervisor Accreditation

Context

The University’s Research Degrees Quality Code requires that all staff appointed as research degree supervisors have the necessary skills and experience to support research students successfully. The University has agreed a standard set of criteria for research supervision accreditation.

Standard Criteria

The University can accredit members of the academic staff as research student supervisors if they

(i) are currently employed by the University in a post that includes research degree supervision as an integral duty and can be expected to remain in post for at least 4 years; and

(ii) are able to demonstrate possession of the appropriate skills and subject knowledge; and

(iii) are normally engaged in research of the highest standard; and

(iv) have attended and successfully completed the University’s training on research degree supervision or equivalent and have experience of acting as a research degree supervisor for at least 3 years at the University of Dundee or another recognised HEI or experience of acting as an associate supervisor for at least 3 years at the University of Dundee.

Honorary Staff Members

Honorary staff should not normally be assigned duties as a Main Supervisor for the University’s research students.

Occasionally staff from other HEIs or from the NHS are appointed as supervisors under the terms of collaborative agreements or other cooperative arrangements. In such cases the University requires similar high levels of skill and experience from honorary staff acting in a supervisory capacity and these staff should, in principle, be able to meet the University’s standard criteria for accreditation.

Probation, Mentoring and Associate Supervisor Status

As part of the process of acquiring accreditation staff are able to participate in the supervisory process in order to gain the necessary experience. Schools are encouraged to develop procedures where staff seeking accreditation are able to act as associate supervisors for students with mentoring provided by either the main supervisor or by another experienced supervisor.
Additional School Criteria and recording Accreditation Status

Individual Schools can specify additional criteria for the accreditation of research student supervisors in the context of academic discipline-based or professional requirements. These additional criteria must take into account the overall aims of the University approach to accreditation and the requirement to support academic staff seeking to gain the skills and experience needed for accreditation by providing opportunities for training and mentoring.

Schools should maintain a record of accreditation to inform decisions on the allocation of supervisory duties.

Withdrawal of accreditation in exceptional circumstances

Under exceptional circumstances, such as unusually high student failure rates, and/or repeated formal complaints and/or repeated failure of students to submit within the normal maximum time-frame, accreditation status can be removed.