CODE OF PRACTICE FOR

RESEARCH STUDENTS, SUPERVISORS, HEADS OF

SCHOOLS, GRADUATE SCHOOL OFFICERS AND

DEAN OF POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH SCHOOL

APPENDICES

1.   Introduction

The intention of this Code is to provide guidance and practical advice for research students and supervisors. Suggestions for improvements are most welcome: these should be sent to the Registry.

The supervision of postgraduate students is clearly personal in character and is influenced by many factors, including the personalities involved and the environment in which students and Supervisors work. There will also be considerable variations in supervisory practice between disciplines. For these reasons the Code does not attempt to describe in exact detail the academic role of the Supervisor. Rather, it aims to identify those aspects of good supervisory practice which are common to all disciplines and to define the mutual responsibilities of Supervisors and students.

The Code sets out the University's policy on good supervisory practice; it should be read in conjunction with the postgraduate regulations set out in the University Calendar (www.abdn.ac.uk/registry/calendar). The Code also has taken guidance from the Quality Assurance Agency's UK Quality Code, Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality, Chapter B11: Research degrees, published in June 2012, which is a statement of good practice that has been endorsed by the higher education community: http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/quality-code-part-b

2.   The University of Aberdeen

2.1   Academic Schools

The University of Aberdeen comprises of 12 Academic Schools:

Business School
School of Biological Sciences
School of Divinity, History and Philosophy
School of Education
School of Engineering
School of Geosciences
School of Language and Literature
School of Law
School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition
School of Natural and Computing Sciences
School of Psychology
School of Social Science

2.2   Postgraduate Research School

The Postgraduate Research School (PRS) provides strategic and operational leadership for research degrees, research student experience and research training and development for students and supervisors developing their research careers. The PRS supports PGR students and supervisors throughout the entire PhD journey, from recruitment to alumni relations and supports researcher/personal development, with a strong emphasis on generic skills, employability, practitioner engagement and entrepreneurship. The PRS also provides support for supervisors through clearly signposted support services and clearly articulated expectations, complemented by a programme of supervisor training.

Specifically the Postgraduate Research School provides strategic oversight and guidance on areas related (but not limited) to

- **Recruitment and Admissions** including, in consultation with Academic Schools and on behalf of the PGR Committee develop and implement processes and procedures related to PGR recruitment and admissions.

- **Governance and Reporting** including, on behalf of the PGR committee, oversight of institutional requirements for data reporting for external bodies and academic schools, establish communications and governance structures. Reviewing (and amend as necessary) administrative processes and procedures related to PGR activity.
- **Support, Monitoring and Progression** including developing institutional best practice and implementation procedures around support, monitoring, assessment and progression that are flexible to meet individual discipline requirements. Administer monitoring processes.
- **Training and Development** including coordinating the delivery of high quality research and generic skills training and development for students and supervisors.
- **Funding and Scholarships** including providing support for institutional funding applications, facilitating the development of external partnerships including overseas government bodies.

The Postgraduate Research School can be contacted on all matters related to PGR activity at graduateschool@abdn.ac.uk

2.3   Registry

The Registry is responsible for a range of student and academic administrative functions that include the following in regard to postgraduate students:

- Registration of postgraduate taught and research students
- Maintenance of student registration data in manual form and on the computerised student record
- Monitoring of student progress, including changes to terms of study
- Dealing with many aspects of postgraduate tuition fee collection and invoices
- Research student thesis submission and dispatch to Examiners, and publication and notification of all postgraduate assessment results
- Preparation of student transcripts when requested
- Certification of eligibility to graduate with higher degrees or to receive other postgraduate awards
- Interpretation and advice on postgraduate regulatory issues

The Registry operates duty Registry Officer service in the Infohub, situated on the Ground Floor of the Students' Union Building. The Infohub operates between 9.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m. Monday – Thursday during term-time (10.00am to 5.00pm on Fridays), with slightly reduced hours during vacation periods. The Registry can be contacted by telephone between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday – Friday on 01224 273505. For e-mail enquiries please contact postgraduate@abdn.ac.uk

Further information about the Registry can be found at www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/teaching/registry-972

2.4   Senate/Quality Assurance Committee

The Quality Assurance Committee has been delegated responsibility from Senate for the assurance of quality and maintenance of standards across all undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate taught elements of research provision. QAC reports directly to the University Committee on Teaching and Learning. Where regulations and procedures refer to Senatus Academicus, it is the QAC that is responsible for the day-to-day implementation of these procedures

Specifically, the Quality Assurance Committee shall:

- Review proposals for (a) the introduction of new courses and programmes of study (b) amendments to existing courses and programmes, and (c) the withdrawal of existing courses and programmes, and make appropriate recommendations;

- Recommend to the UCTL changes in the General and Supplementary Regulations;

- Oversee the quality control of taught courses and programmes through scrutiny of reports from the External Examiner Reports, Annual Course Review, Annual Programme Review, Internal Teaching Review Reports and Reports from Professional & Statutory Bodies, as applicable; and refer policy issues to the University Committee on Teaching and Learning, as appropriate;

- Be responsible, on behalf of the UCTL, for co-ordinating a regular programme of Internal Teaching Reviews for monitoring and reviewing courses and programmes of study and consider and recommend to UCTL revisions to the procedures for Internal Teaching Review, as necessary;

- Be responsible, on behalf of the UCTL, for regularly reviewing alignment of University policies with the QAA Quality Code, the wider Academic Infrastructure and external reference points and for recommending revisions to policies, as appropriate.

- Comment on draft collaborative teaching agreements and monitor the quality of provision provided by collaborative partners through the scrutiny of annual reports and recommend to UCTL revisions to the procedures for the approval and oversight of collaborative provision, as necessary;

- Oversee issues relating to student progress, including the establishment of Student Progress Committees and Fitness to Practise Committees, as appropriate, and make recommendations to the Senate for the discontinuation of attendance, as appropriate.

- Undertake such other functions as may be referred to the Committee by the UCTL.

2.5   Graduate School Officers

Graduate School Officers have extensive delegated authority to undertake specific duties on behalf of the Quality Assurance Committee. Further details can be found in Section A.2.

3.   The Application Process

The following degrees are available by research:

- PhD (Doctor of Philosophy)
- (DPT) Doctor in Practical Theology
- EdD (Doctor of Education)
- EngD (Doctor of Engineering)
- MPhil (Master of Philosophy)
- MD (Doctor of Medicine)
- ChM (Master of Surgery)
- MLE (Master of Land Economy)
- LLM (Master of Laws)
- MLitt (Master of Letters)
- MSc (Master of Science)
- MTh (Master of Theology)
- MRes (Master of Research)

Entry requirements for research degrees can be found at www.abdn.ac.uk/registry/calendar/info/postgraduateA.doc

3.1   The Admission of Postgraduate Research Students

Admission to the University is in accordance with the University's Admissions Policy which is available at https://www.abdn.ac.uk/study/postgraduate-research/pgr-admissions-policy.php

Full details of how to apply, including how the application is processed, can be found at https://www.abdn.ac.uk/study/postgraduate-research/

3.2   English language requirements for international students

To study successfully in Aberdeen students will need to speak and write English fluently. Full details of our English Language requirements can be found at www.abdn.ac.uk/study/international/english-requirements.php

4.   Registration

At the start of their studies and at the start of each subsequent academic year in which they are under supervised study, students are required to register with the University. As part of the eRegistration process students are required to make arrangements to pay their tuition fees. Thereafter they can obtain a student ID card. Full details of how research students can register can be found at www.abdn.ac.uk/newstudents/registration/

It is very important that students remember to register at both the beginning of their studies and in each subsequent academic year. The University is given funding based on the number of students registered each year. In addition Schools are given credit for each student registered so it is very important for the School and the University that students remember to register at the start of each academic year.

In August each year the Registry will send an email to remind continuing students to re-register.

4.1   Use of e-mail

Students will receive a University e-mail account when they register with the University Computing Centre (see Section 14.3). The University will normally use e-mail to communicate with students during term-time and messages will be sent to their University e-mail account.

It is the student's responsibility to **check e-mail on a regular basis** (at least weekly) and to **keep their mailbox tidy** to avoid going over quota. Failure to check e-mail, or non-receipt of e-mail because the mailbox is over quota or due to non-delivery of a message to a non-University account, cannot be used as grounds for an academic appeal (see Section 13)

4.2   Student portals

A student's University Computer ID and password also gives them access to their Student Portal which can be viewed at https://www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/

Through their Portal students can view and, where appropriate, update the information, including home and term-time addresses, held in their student record. The Portal also provides students with a personalised gateway to the on-line learning resources associated with the courses on which they are enrolled. Data in the Student Portal is updated nightly from the live student record system.

Students can also download applications to graduate from their Portal. See Section 12 for further details.

5.   Supervision

Supervision of postgraduate research students varies depending on the subject area, the background and needs of the student, and the work patterns and personalities of the student and supervisors. Supervisors are normally Professors, Readers or Lecturers of the University, or may be honorary members of staff, or members of staff of an approved research institution (as listed in General Regulation 19 for Research Degrees). He or she will be part of a supervisory team. **A supervisory team will comprise more than one supervisor, working in co-supervision, always with one supervisor designated as lead. At least one member of the supervisory must be a Professor, Reader or Lecturer of the University.**

The benefit of having a supervisory team is that the student should always have an identified point of contact who they can approach. A student may also have an academic member of staff who has been appointed and identified by the School to provide additional pastoral support. The term of reference for this person will vary between Schools, they may be termed a Postgraduate Research Coordinator or a mentor, for example. For the purposes of this document they will be referred to collectively as an adviser.

Students may have a supervisor appointed who is external to the University, i.e. not a paid employee of the University, an honorary members of staff (or indeed members of staff of an approved research institution, as listed in General Regulation 18 for Research Degrees), but they must always have at least one paid academic member of staff at the University who is appointed to provide supervision of their research.

The percentage input of each supervisor will be recorded on the University's Student Record system. Where an adviser has been appointed, he or she will also be recorded on the student's record, but not as a supervisor.

Where the lead supervisor is a probationary lecturer or a member of staff supervising a student for the first time, a co-supervisor should be appointed who will normally be an experienced member of the academic staff of the University who has seen a student through to successful completion of a research degree.

The lead supervisor should make contact with their supervisee prior to the student's arrival in Aberdeen. As part of the pre-arrival contact, lead supervisors should arrange a meeting between the supervisory team and the student to take place as soon as possible after the student has arrived in Aberdeen.

5.1   Contact between students and supervisors

Section A sets out the responsibilities of both research students and supervisors. It is the responsibility of supervisors to maintain regular contact through supervisory meetings (what is expected is defined more closely by Schools in light of the demands of the subject), and maintain reasonable accessibility so that advice may be offered at other times.

Research students and their supervisors should, as soon as possible, establish mutually agreed means of communication and contact with one another.

While the amount of contact between a student and supervisor will vary depending on the subject area and also on the stage of the student, it is expected that there should be, as a minimum, one formal minuted supervisory meeting at least once a month with informal meetings held more frequently, as and when required.

Students in their first year of study may require more frequent meetings. Indeed, because the success of a student's research may depend on the degree of contact and discussion between supervisor and student in the early stages of the work, it is likely that contact during this early period will need to be much more frequent than the minimum expectation of at least once a month. Weekly meetings during the first term may be advisable, although their frequency will vary from discipline to discipline.

The student should take brief written notes of formal meetings with the supervisor, and both student and supervisor should agree that the notes are an accurate record of the meeting and should retain a copy of these notes.

Supervisors are expected to assist research students throughout their period of supervised research and for up to twelve months thereafter during the Extension Period, if such a period has been approved, or to completion if sooner, but are not normally obliged to act as Supervisors after this period except when a thesis has been examined and referred, in which case the Supervisor is obliged to provide advice until the specified date for resubmission.

5.2   The Early Stages

The success of a student in his or her research depends to a large extent on the help and guidance that the supervisor offers, especially in the early stages of the work.   Thus, close personal contact at this time is essential if later difficulties are to be avoided.

At the start of a student's study, the lead supervisor must assist the student in defining the topic of research, either before arrival at the University or in the early weeks of study. At the initial meetings, the student and the lead supervisor will need to ensure that:

   i. the project is one which is within the supervisors' field of expertise;

   ii. the project can be achieved with available resources;

   iii. the project is suitable for the degree which the student aims to undertake and should be capable of completion within the prescribed period of study (normally 12 months full time for a Masters by Research, 24 months full-time for MPhil, 36 months full- time for PhD). Experience suggests that in some fields, perhaps especially in the humanities, students need to be saved from over-ambition –the attempt at a definitive study of too large a;

   iv. the lead supervisor is likely to be available throughout, and in particular at the beginning of, the prescribed period of study;

   v. if particular conditions relating to study or examination have been specified in the letter of admission, for example the acquisition of computing skills or knowledge of a foreign language, then ways of implementing them should be agreed.;

   vi. a skills audit is completed that identifies both generic and subject-specific training required to assist the student in working towards completion of their research (this will need to be reviewed annually)

Part-time students will have particular problems in the early stages: it may be difficult to arrange meetings with the supervisors, the part-time student may find it difficult to set priorities and provide enough free time for research. The supervisors should be aware of these problems and attempt to deal with them sympathetically, while still ensuring that the student is launched on the project without undue delay.

5.3   Absence of supervisor

Schools must make arrangements for maintaining the supervision of research postgraduate students whenever the supervisor is absent. The arrangements made will vary between Schools/disciplines and will depend on whether the supervisor who is absent is the sole supervisor or is part of a supervisory team. Where a sole supervisor is absent an acting supervisor should be appointed as soon as possible if the supervisor is absent and out of contact. Schools/disciplines are responsible for allocating acting supervisors. It is the responsibility of the Head of School to ensure that any such interim supervisory arrangements are made.

5.4   Students studying at local research institutions

Students studying at one of the approved research institutions listed in General Regulation 19 for Research Degrees will have, as a minimum, a named University of Aberdeen supervisor and a supervisor at the research institution. The extent of University of Aberdeen involvement in supervision will vary and the student should be informed of what to expect by the relevant School.

As a minimum, the University of Aberdeen supervisor will ensure that all University of Aberdeen procedures are followed and that progress is monitored through standard University procedures. Students are strongly advised to attend University skills training courses.

6.   Degree Regulations and Changes in Terms of Study

The Regulations for Postgraduate Study are available at the following address: www.abdn.ac.uk/registry/calendar/postgraduate

(Please note that Regulations are continually reviewed and may be revised due to changes in policies and procedures. Any changes that are made that apply to students during their period of registration at the University are clearly indicated on the above website).

If any change in the conditions of study notified in a student's letter of admission becomes necessary, e.g. transfer of degree or change from full-time to part-time study, the student should discuss the matter with his/her Supervisor who will submit an application for consideration by a Graduate School Officer.   Such applications should be made as far as possible in advance of the date when the change is to take effect. Official permission is necessary for all changes in conditions of study including suspension of study, transfer to another degree, study off-campus outside Aberdeen and reduction or extension of the period of study. Application forms to request any of the above can be printed from the web at http://www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/study/changes-to-studies

Please note that, as many changes to the period of study (suspension, extension, move to part-time etc.) affect the tuition fees charged, it is very important to keep the Registry informed.

6.1   Normal minimum periods of study

For the degrees of Doctor of Philosophy, Doctor of Education, or Doctor of Practical Theology – not less than 36 months full-time;60 months part-time (for students who started prior to 1 August 2017) or 72 months part time (for students who started after 1 August 2017)
For the degree of Doctor of Practical Theology – not less than 36 months full-time or 60 months part-time (for students who started prior to 1 August 2017) or 72 months part time (for students who started after 1 August 2017)
For the degree of Doctor of Engineering – not less than 48 months full-time or 84 months part-time (for students who started prior to 1 August 2017) or 96 months part time (for students who started after 1 August 2017) [36 months full-time or 60 months (pre- 1 August 2017)/72 months (pre 1 August 2017) part-time for students admitted directly to the Project stage of the programme]
For the degrees of Doctor of Medicine– not less than 24 months full-time or 36 months part-time (for students who started prior to 1 August 2017) or 48 months part time (for students who started after 1 August 2017)
For the degree of Master of Philosophy – not less than 24 months full-time or 42 months part-time (for students who started prior to 1 August 2017) or 48 months part time (for students who started after 1 August 2017)
For the degrees of Master of Surgery – not less than 18 months full-time or 24 months part-time (for students who started prior to 1 August 2017) or 36 months part time (for students who started after 1 August 2017)
For any other Master's degrees – not less than 12 months full-time or 24 months part-time

It is expected that students will normally submit their thesis by the end of their period of registered supervised study. An additional 12 month Extension Period is permitted for students who commenced study prior to 1

August 2010. For students who commenced study after 1 August 2010, a request to extend the period of study must be made (see Section 6.7).

6.2   Attendance monitoring procedures

In order to be eligible to submit themselves for examination, students must have a Class Certificate for the course in question. A Class Certificate is confirmation that a candidate has duly performed the work prescribed for a course. There is no physical certificate. A student who has been validly registered for a research programme, and who has not withdrawn from that programme prior to their viva examination (or been deemed to have withdrawn, in accordance with Regulation 25 of Schedule A General Regulations for Research Degrees, or to have had their class certificate refused), is regarded as having obtained a Class Certificate for that course automatically.

The University operates a monitoring system for all research postgraduate students to identify students who may be experiencing difficulties with their studies. If a student's supervisor is concerned with his/her attendance, then a rigorous monitoring system will ensure that students are informed, via email, that there is concern over their attendance. As part of this process, the student will be asked to explain their absence. Failure to meet the attendance requirements for a course may result in the Class Certificate for that course being refused. Full details of the University's monitoring procedures can be found here: www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/study/monitoring-and-student-progress.

Except with the permission of Senate, candidates shall not be permitted to present themselves for the assessment of a research degree unless they have obtained a Class Certificate. Unless good cause is demonstrated, students who have not met the expected attendance and monitoring requirements will be refused a Class Certificate. Students not granted a Class Certificate under these circumstances will be barred from appearing for the assessment for the degree and will be withdrawn from study. It shall be for Senate to determine what constitutes good cause for absence.

6.3   Tier 4 Visa Monitoring Requirements

As well as adhering to the attendance requirements outlined in Section 6.2, the requirements of UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) mean that the University is obliged to carry out visa checks for Tier 4 students three times during an academic year. The first check will be done when the student registers at the start of the academic year, and the remaining checks will be done during the course of the academic year. The checks are only for students who have a Tier 4 visa. Tier 4 students will be emailed with dates and times of the checks that are performed during the academic year, so must ensure that they regularly check their University email account. Failure to report for these checks could mean that students are de-registered from their studies and reported to the UKVI. This could lead to their Tier 4 visa being curtailed or cancelled.

Students on a Tier 4 visa should note that they may be subject to a regulatory framework implemented by UKVI. Where these regulations are more stringent than those stipulated within the University's own regulations, those of the UKVI will take priority.

6.4   Study off-campus

Research study may be undertaken either wholly within the University or in association with other research centres in the UK or overseas, provided that adequate supervision can be given.

If full time research students wish to conduct their entire research elsewhere then this must be agreed with the supervisor at the point of admission, subject to any visa restrictions. Candidates must agree a structure of regular contact with their supervisor and must be able to demonstrate that the facilities and infrastructure that are available to them off-campus are sufficient to enable their research to be completed at a distance. **Please note, however, that the Supervisor(s) may require students to spend additional periods of time in Aberdeen depending on the progress and nature of their studies.**

Full time candidate who have not agreed to conduct their entire research off campus must gain approval from their Supervisor(s) and the Graduate School Officer, who will decide whether off-campus study is viable and that adequate supervision can be provided during any periods spent off-campus.

An application form to request off-campus study can be downloaded at the following address: www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/study/changes-to-studies **and must be submitted at least 6 weeks in advance of the start of the period of study off-campus.**

Research students working for any period off-campus must keep the Registry fully informed of the periods to be spent in Aberdeen and elsewhere. **Such students should also remember to complete eRegistration and request their ID card by post if they are going to be off-campus at the start of their studies or the start of a new academic year.** To request an ID card be posted out, students should email postgraduate@abdn.ac.uk**.** Research students will be emailed each August to remind them to re-register and to inform them of the procedure to request a new ID card by post.

Whilst off-campus, research students are still subject to normal monitoring of their progress.

If the student is an international student holding a Tier 4 visa, the University must be satisfied that the request to study off-campus complies with the law regarding attendance requirements, before approval can be given.

Except in the case of part time Home/EU students, where no reduction can be sought, fees for a period of off-campus study will normally be reduced by half. However, there may be circumstances when it is not felt appropriate for the student's fee to be reduced, in which case the supervisor(s) can indicate this on the off-campus approval form.

Off campus study is normally approved for academic reasons, such as for the completion of fieldwork, work/industrial placements associated with the student's research, or as part of collaborative venture with another institution, i.e. a dual or joint degree. In these circumstances, it would be deemed appropriate for the student's tuition fee to be reduced.

However, if it is the case that the student has sufficient resources in order to maintain regular contact with the supervisor, i.e. by email or telephone, particular in situations when the student wishes to spend a period at their home out with Aberdeen, or at another institution when it is not part of a formal collaborative arrangement, then a fee reduction would not normally be permitted.

Where it has been agreed at the point of admission that a full time student will undertake their entire programme at a distance, tuition fees will not normally be reduced.

6.5   Suspension of studies

During periods when students are unable to make progress with their studies due to medical reasons or other good cause, they may apply to Senate to suspend their studies for a fixed period. A request for suspension of studies for more than 12 months is not usually approved. Should a further suspension beyond 12 months be required a new application must be made. Indefinite suspensions of study cannot be granted.

Each application will be considered on its own merit.

A suspension should be taken when a student is not engaged in research or work towards their degree. If a student is still engaged in research or work towards their degree, then a suspension may not be appropriate.

It is the responsibility of the student to keep any sponsor informed of the reasons for requesting a suspension of studies and, **in addition to University approval, approval must be sought from the sponsor.** This is particularly important for students funded by one of the Research Councils who expect doctoral students to have completed

within four years of full time study. **Funded students should include with their suspension request form confirmation that approval has been sought from their funding body, where applicable.**

During the period of suspension, tuition fees are not payable although full-time students would become liable for council tax. If all fees have already been paid to the University (including tuition, accommodation and library), students, or their sponsors where appropriate, will receive a refund for any periods of suspension in that academic year. Periods of suspension do not count towards the student's period of study, and the student's end date will be amended accordingly.

Students who suspend their studies are eligible to apply for registration as an Associate Student. Registration as an Associate Student costs £120 per academic year (or part year) and allows students to keep in touch with the University while their studies are suspended and have an ID card, access to the Library and borrowing rights, access to the Computing Centre and an e-mail account and access to student welfare/support facilities. Students should inform the Registry if they wish to have Associate Student Status whilst suspended from study.

An application form to suspend study can be printed from the web at www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/study/changes-to-studies. Applications for suspension must be supported by Supervisor and approved by a Graduate School Officer. If the suspension is requested on medical grounds, medical certificates will be required. In all cases, an application for suspension should be made **prior** to the period for which suspension is to commence. Suspensions will not normally be approved retrospectively. International students studying at the University on a visa should refer to the terms of their visa when requesting a suspension of studies.

Examples of Good Cause for a suspension are given under Section 6.8 below.

International students studying at the University on a visa should refer to the terms of their visa when requesting a suspension of studies.

6.6   Extension to period of supervised study*

Research students who are granted additional funding can request an extension to their period of registration. Full tuition fees are payable during extended periods of supervised study and it is the student's responsibility to ensure that financial support is available to meet the cost of fees and maintenance.

Students should contact the Registry and provide a copy of their funding letter confirming that they have been awarded additional funding. Supervised study will only be extended if funding has been given to cover the cost of tuition fees.

(* Supervised study is the period for which tuition fees are charged).

6.7   Extension to period of study following completion of supervised study

It is expected that research students will normally submit their theses by the end of their period of registered supervised study. (Supervised study is the period for which tuition fees are charged). Students registered prior to 1 August 2010 are, though, permitted an additional 12 month 'extension period' (previously writing-up period) for completion of the thesis, provided it does not run contrary to the requirements of their funding body. Changes to regulations for research postgraduate, approved by Senate on 10 February 2010, mean that students registered after 1 August 2010 are not automatically permitted a 12 month 'extension period' and must instead apply for a period of extension.

Research students approaching the end of their supervised study **must** complete an Application for Extension form three months prior to the termination of the period of supervised study. Students funded by one of the UK Research Councils, or other funding bodies, should note that they must comply with the requirement of their funding body as regards length of period of study and deadline for submission of thesis. It is the expectation of Research Councils that full-time PhD students funded by them should submit their thesis for examination within

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four years of starting their programme of research. If an extension is required this must be approved by the relevant Research Council in addition to having the approval of the University. **It is the responsibility of the student and the supervisor to keep the Research Council informed of any delays in submission.**

Please note that all students, regardless of whether they were full time or part time during thei supervised study, are registered as part time during an Extension Period.

6.7.1   Normal periods of extension

Extensions can be granted up to a maximum of 12 months in the first instance, but the combined period of supervised study and Extension Period will not normally exceed the following:

<u>PhD, EdD, DPT</u>	48 months (for previously full-time students) or 84 months (for previously part-time students)
<u>EngD</u>	60 months (for previously full-time students) or 96 months (for previously part-time students)
<u>MPhil, MD or ChM</u>	36 months (for previously full-time students) or 60 months (for previously part-time students)
<u>Other Master's</u>	24 months (for previously full-time students) or 36 months (for previously part-time students)

Hence, students admitted with a supervised period of 42 months (such as those funded by NERC etc.) would normally only be granted an Extension Period of 6 months in the first instance.

Students submitting an extension within the above time frames, following the completion of their supervised study, must be able to demonstrate evidence of progress in their research and make clear the feasibility of submitting their thesis within the period of extension being sought. A thesis plan must be submitted giving target dates for completion of each chapter. **Please note**, students requiring additional supervision should request an extension to their period of supervised study by completing an extension to supervised study form, and should note that additional tuition fees will be payable.

6.7.2   Exceptional periods of extension

Senate may, on the application of the candidate, extend the period of study and grant an "exceptional extension", but will not do so **without good cause**.

Extensions beyond the above limits will only be granted in **exceptional** circumstances, namely, **where the candidate's work has been hampered by medical or personal or unexpected academic circumstances or exceptional circumstances arising from employment for which supporting documentary evidence can be made available** (see Section 6.8 for examples of what may constitute exceptional circumstances). Students submitting an application for an "exceptional extension" must, again, demonstrate clear evidence of progress and **must submit a thesis plan giving target dates for completion of each chapter.**

<u>In no case will any extension be approved beyond the following maximum periods of study, which include the supervised period of study:</u>

<u>PhD, EdD, DPT</u>	60 months (for previously full-time students) or 96 months (for previously part-time students)
<u>EngD</u>	60 months (for previously full-time students) or 96 months (for previously part-time students)
<u>MPhil, MD or ChM</u>	48 months (for previously full-time students) or 72 months (for previously part-time students)

Other Master's   36 months (for previously full-time students) or 48 months (for previously part-time students)

6.8   Examples of good cause for an "exceptional extension" or suspension of studies

The following circumstances are **typical** of what *may* be considered grounds for applying **an exceptional extension or a suspension of studies**. The circumstances will either prevent the student from working altogether or severely affect his/her ability to work effectively.

a. Serious physical or mental illness of the student;
b. Death/serious illness of a partner, close family member or close friend;
c. Unforeseeable or unpreventable events such as distress or injury caused by a serious accident; the affects of being a victim of a criminal act or the distress or serious disruption caused by fire, flood or other natural catastrophy;
d. Serious personal problems such as relationship problems, family crises;
e. Unexpected changes to the student's source of funding (NB: students must ensure that they have the necessary funds before embarking on their degree);
f. Breakdown of *essential* equipment where a student is unable to continue research and the use of alternative equipment is not possible;
g. Delays in obtaining ethical approval where approval has been sought in good time;
h. Jury service; military service;
i. Maternity or adoption leave;
j. Delays in progress due to unforeseen problems with the degree programme and/or working environment (e.g. moving of offices/buildings, supervisor(s) changes and unavailability etc.) which are outside of the student's control. (NB: the problem **must** be reported to the appropriate School at the time it occurs);
k. Study leave necessary for the degree programme (other than official leave of absence for study at an approved institution or fieldwork – see Section 5.4);
l. Internship/work placement necessary for the degree programme.

The following circumstances will not be regarded as grounds for applying for any extension or a suspension of studies:

m. The student or supervisor was unaware of policy and application procedures for interruptions and/or extensions for postgraduate degrees. It is ultimately the student's responsibility to ensure that they are aware of all policies and procedures relevant to their degree;
n. Further primary research and/or laboratory work;
o. Long-term holidays/vacations;
p. Inadequate planning and time management;
q. Normal pregnancy (excluding statutory maternity leave entitlement);
r. Difficulties with English language (including delays as a result of proof reading);
s. Computer or other equipment failure or theft where use of an alternative is possible or any loss of work was avoidable, except where the work is lost through the failure of University of Aberdeen systems as confirmed by School or University of Aberdeen IT department;
t. Change in employment conditions: requests from part-time students who are working while studying may exceptionally be considered where a change in employment conditions was unforeseen. This will not normally be an acceptable reason for students in the submission pending or resubmission periods.

In addition to the above, the following circumstance *will* not be regarded as grounds for applying for an extension:

u. Circumstances encountered during supervised study, which should have been dealt with at the time.

The final decision on whether a suspension or an extension is granted or not is at the discretion of the Graduate School Officer on behalf of the Senate.

6.9   Fees During Extension Period

All research students who have completed their prescribed period of supervised study, but who have not submitted their thesis for examination, are required to pay in each academic year in which they are not liable for a tuition fee a continuation fee to continue their candidature for the degree. These students must submit an application to extend their candidature.

For students who started their degree before 1 August 2014, the continuation fee is £120.

6.10   Students submitting without approved extension or outside the maximum period of study

Students who do not have an approved extension or who are beyond the maximum period of study for their research degree, will not be permitted to register. Such a student will not normally be permitted to submit a thesis for examination, and may only do so if the thesis is bound and ready to submit and permission has been given by a Graduate School Officer on the recommendation of the relevant School. For students who commenced study after 1 August 2010, a fee will be payable on submission of the thesis. This fee will be one-third of the Home/EU full-time tuition fee rate for the academic year in which the student is submitting their thesis.

6.11   Failure to submit

Students who fail to submit a thesis or, in the case of candidates in Fine Art, a thesis and exhibit or, in the case of candidates in Musical Composition, a portfolio of compositions by the deadline specified in the Regulations will be deemed to have withdrawn and will have their registration recorded as lapsed.

6.12   Withdrawal from study

Where possible students should discuss their intention to withdraw with their Supervisor, the Postgraduate Research School, Student Support staff or Registry staff member, the latter will advise the student when he or she completes a Withdrawal form at the Student Reception counter. Students withdrawing prematurely from study may or may not be entitled to a partial rebate of tuition fees paid, depending on the point in the academic year when they withdraw and also whether they have paid all accommodation, library, phone bills etc. to the University, where applicable. The Registry will assess whether any refund of fees is due. Students must submit a withdrawal form to the Registry shortly after the decision has been made to withdraw from study. The date of withdrawal will normally be the date the form is received by the Registry and will not normally be applied retrospectively. Tuition fees will be charged up until the date of withdrawal.

The University is obliged to report International Students who are studying on a Tier 4 visa to the UKVI as no longer being in attendance, if they have withdrawn from study. Students should refer to terms of their visa.

7.   Academic Progression

7.1   Postgraduate Assessment Form

All research students are subject to bi-annual monitoring assessments to ascertain whether progress has been satisfactory.

Assessment forms vary across Schools and will be circulated to supervisors for completion electronically or in hard copy. The assessment form should be completed by the Supervisor(s) and the student, and the Head of School.

It is a formal record of the student's progress and their generic skills training, and gives Supervisors, students and Heads of School an opportunity to comment on progress and supervision. It is thus very important that these forms are completed.

Students registered for research training programmes such as the MRes in Psychology or the MLitt in Visual Culture are exempt from completing the assessment form as long as they are completing Student Course Evaluation Forms at the end of each course taken.

7.2   Postgraduate Structured Management Framework

Generic Postgraduate Structured Management Frameworks have been established for the degrees of PhD, MPhil and the one-year research Master's degree (full-time and part-time). It is intended that Schools will modify the Frameworks to suit their needs, while retaining a core element to ensure consistency of quality supervisory practice.

The Frameworks have three components:

- development of a strong interactive relationship between the research student and Supervisor(s);
- monitoring of the research student's progress and performance at the School level by the Head of School;
- ensuring the quality assurance of postgraduate progress, education, training and development across Schools by a University-wide monitoring system.

The Generic Frameworks are available at www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/teaching/postgraduate-research-1681

7.3   Progression from year 1 to year 2

The Postgraduate Structured Management Framework sets out the general University-wide criteria for the first year of research studies and progression from year 1 to year 2. In addition, some Schools have developed more specific criteria.

Students should make an oral presentation of research between months 9 and 12 and by month 12 a formal report is required to be submitted to the Head of School with comment by the Supervisor(s). In some Schools a School Postgraduate Progress Committee or School Research Committee will consider the first year report if necessary.

This report will help determine whether the student is allowed to progress to year 2 of the research degree.

7.4   Turnitin

All repot submitted for progression from year 1 to year 2 will be submitted by the student via the School Turnitin sites in order to enaure that there are no instances of Academic Misconduct. The Turnitin report wil be reviewed by either the supervisory team or thep progression review panel, as required. If it is identified that Acadmeic Misconduct may have taken place, the case will be referred to Head of School for a Preliminary Investigation to be carried out. The procedures for dealing with Academic Misconduct will be followed as per the Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Academic): When things don't go to plan | StaffNet | The University of Aberdeen (abdn.ac.uk)

7.5   Progression from year 2 to year 3

The requirements of year 2 and progression to the third year of the PhD are set out in the Postgraduate Structured Management Framework. A second formal report is required to be submitted by month 24 which will determine whether a student progresses to the third year of PhD study.

7.6   Guidelines to be followed when dealing with postgraduate research students making unsatisfactory progress

Using the Postgraduate Structured Management Framework, the formal bi-annual Research Student Assessment Forms, together with any additional School standard practices (e.g. interim 3-monthly reports, presentations, School Research Committee, etc), Schools will be able to monitor a research student's progress.

Where a research student's progress is flagged as "unsatisfactory" in the bi-annual assessment form, the School's PGR Coordinator would be asked to meet with the student.

General Regulation 23 for Research Degrees states that "Senatus Academicus shall in respect of candidates admitted for degrees by research obtain at bi-annual intervals reports as to whether their progress has been satisfactory. If Senatus Academicus is of the opinion on consideration of the reports that a candidate's progress is unsatisfactory, it shall have the power to recommend to the Senatus Academicus that their candidature for the degree be discontinued."

The following procedures relate to the above regulation:

7.6.1   Initial warning

When a School has decided that a postgraduate student's performance, or lack of attendance/contact, is giving rise to concern and has reached the stage beyond which an informal word of encouragement will suffice, the student should be warned formally that his/her performance and/or attendance is such that, if not improved, he/she may be asked to discontinue study. This should be done by the Head of School or, where appropriate, School Research Committee or Postgraduate Progress Committee and will normally take the form of an interview. The warning should immediately be followed by a letter to the student from the Head of School, setting out dates when particular targets must be achieved. It might also stipulate required attendance on specific training courses. The letter should also include details of support the School might provide, e.g. stipulate regular meetings with the Supervisor(s). Ideally dates by which targets should be achieved should be agreed in writing in conjunction with the student, Supervisor(s) and Head of School.

A copy of the letter should be sent to the Postgraduate Research School. The letter will be shown to the relevant Graduate School Officer but the Registry will not at this stage take any action other than to place the warning letter in the student's personal file.

7.6.2   Formal consideration

Should the student's performance not improve the Head of School should write to notify the relevant Graduate School Officer (through the Postgraduate Research School), recommending that the student's studies be terminated in accordance with General Regulation 27 for Research Degrees. Full details should be provided of the supervision and training provided to date, including reports of any meetings with the student to discuss progress, and details of the monitoring procedures applied by the School.

If, on behalf of Senate, the relevant Graduate School Officer upholds the School's recommendation to discontinue study, the student will be informed in writing by the Registry and advised of the right to submit an academic appeal (see Section 13 for further details).

8.   Skills Training – Researcher Development

The acquisition and development of personal transferable, employment-related and generic research skills is an important part of postgraduate research training. Courses covering a wide range of these skills are available to postgraduate research students.

All research students must undertake a skills audit at the beginning of their programme of study, and annually thereafter throughout their prescribed period of study to determine research, transferable and generic skills requirements.

Programmes are regularly reviewed to create maximum opportunity for learning.

The University's Skills for Researcher Development website provides support for students in completion of their studies and preparation for future employment. Through the website, students can access a programme of generic and discipline specific skills training: www.abdn.ac.uk/develop

Research students should discuss with their supervisor during the first month of their studies and on an ongoing basis throughout their studies which courses they should attend. Some courses are compulsory and students should check with their School which ones they must attend. Students will be given full details at induction with their School.

In July 2010, Vitae launched the Researcher Development Statement (www.vitae.ac.uk/researchers-professional-development), which replaces the Joint Skills Statement and is endorsed as the framework for skills training of research students by the UK Research Councils and the University itself.

Personal Development Plans (PDP) were introduced in October 2005 for all new first year research students as a basis for generic skills development planning. Using the personal development planning process will help students plan their research methods, programmes and learning in terms of what to do, how to do it and when to do it. It is a means of target setting, progress monitoring and general academic feedback. Information about PDPs is available at: www.abdn.ac.uk/develop/ .

9.   Research Governance: Policies on Research Ethics, Good Research Conduct, and Research Data Management

The University's framework for research ethics and governance is outlined in the Handbook for Research Governance. The Handbook is the central authority and reference point within the institution for matters relating to research governance and should be used and referred to accordingly by research staff and students.

It sets out the standards, principles and expectations for research ethics and governance which underpin the University's approach to research, and provides an overview of the structures in place, institutionally, for ensuring that the University meets the highest standards in its research ethics and governance arrangements.

The Handbook also outlines the University's approach to research ethics and provides information on what research
requires ethical approval and how to obtain that ethical approval. It details the University's policy and guidelines for good research conduct, and its position on unacceptable research conduct, including the processes in place for reporting and investigating allegations of unacceptable research conduct.

The   Handbook   for   Research   Governance   can   be   accessed   here: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/research/research-governance-304.php

10.   Preparation and Submission of a Thesis
(See also Appendix B)

10.1   Thesis Format

The thesis is expected to form a coherent whole, with a consistent argument or series of arguments running through it. The incorporation of material published by the candidate during the period of registration for the degree is permitted, but it must be accompanied by written commentary on publications submitted. Furthermore, the footnoting/end noting must make clear which sections of the thesis are based on published material and how much individual responsibility the candidate has for any jointly authored work. Such material must be properly and stylistically incorporated into the thesis.

Notes on the presentation of a thesis are produced by the Library. They can be accessed at www.abdn.ac.uk/library/documents/guides/gen/qggen009.pdf. The Notes include information on upper word limits of thesis length. Information can also be found in the regulations in the University Calendar at www.abdn.ac.uk/registry/calendar/

10.2   Thesis Word Length

Unless the specific permission of the appropriate Graduate School Officer is obtained (such permission being granted only on the grounds of the exceptional nature of the subject matter or, in the case of candidates registered for a degree in Law, on grounds of exceptional circumstances) the normal maximum length of a PhD, EngD, MD or ChM is 100,000 words; the normal maximum length of an MPhil thesis is 70,000 words; the normal maximum length of an EdD thesis is 60,000 words; and the normal maximum length of a Master's degree thesis is 40,000 words. In each case this includes appendices and footnotes but excludes bibliographies, statistical and computational compilations, analogous illustrative material (maps, facsimile documents, etc.), and, where appropriate, other materials such as field notes and transcriptions of interviews. If in doubt, the student and supervisory team should consult, at the earliest opportunity, with the appropriate Graduate School Officer.

Any data compilation, or material such as field notes or transcriptions of interviews should not be included in the bound thesis but should be stored separately on disk. This material must be anonymised, as appropriate, and then securely attached to the thesis prior to submission.

Notes: The above prescriptions do not apply to editions.

10.3   Intention to Submit

Students should inform the Registry of their intention to submit their thesis by completing an Intention to Submit Form (available at www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/study/downloadable-forms-693.php). This form should be submitted at least one month before the intended submission date. By doing this it is anticipated that examiners will be appointed by the time the thesis is submitted and the thesis can be sent out for examination straight away. If the Intention to Submit form is not submitted prior to submission of the thesis there will be a delay in the thesis being sent out for examination whilst examiners are appointed.

The thesis should be submitted for examination as a pdf to the Registry via postgraduate@abdn.ac.uk

10.4   Nomination and Appointment of Examiners

Senate has the power to approve the appointment of examiners for higher degrees examined by thesis. Such appointments are approved on behalf of Senate by the Quality Assurance Committee.

Once a research student submit to the Registry the relevant form to intimate their intention of submitting a thesis or other work for a higher degree, the Registry will formally request the relevant Head of School to nominate internal and external examiners by sending a Nomination of Examiners form for completion (available at www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/teaching/postgraduate-research-1681). In identifying examiners, Heads of School are

expected to liaise with the candidate's supervisor and indicate reasons for proposing the external examiner. Any contact between a candidate and the nominated external examiner during the candidate's career should also be indicated.

If a candidate is a full- or part-time member of the academic staff of the University, at least two external examiners must be appointed in addition to an internal moderator. In all other cases, normally one internal examiner and one external examiner are nominated.

In submitting nominations, Heads of School are reminded of the following:-

- an internal examiner should be appointed for all higher degrees examined by thesis. In those instances where it is necessary for two or more external examiners to be appointed e.g. when the candidate is a member of academic staff, an internal moderator must be appointed whose responsibility will be to oversee the examination and, in particular, to ensure that standard University procedures and policies are followed. The internal moderator, if required, is not appointed to examine the thesis and, as such, is not permitted to sign the examiners' reports on the thesis or certify that the minor corrections have been achieved to the examiners' satisfaction;
- a candidate's supervisor (past or present) cannot be appointed as an internal examiner;
- a member of an associated research institute who holds a University of Aberdeen appointment may be appointed as an internal examiner;
- a former member of staff who has left the University since a candidate completed his/her research may be appointed as an *internal* examiner and offered the same fee as an external examiner;
- in all other cases an internal examiner or moderator must be a contracted employee of the University (excluding honorary members of staff);
- where the examiners appointed do not include a contracted employee of the University a moderator should be appointed to oversee the examination arrangements
- Heads of School should identify on the nomination form those theses where confidentiality might appropriately apply. As part of the appointment process, the attention of the external examiner will be drawn to this matter by the Registry. It is expected that the imposition of confidentiality restrictions would only be used exceptionally.

Heads of School are also asked to ensure that the proposed examiners are aware that they are being nominated and their availability for examination of the thesis checked.

Candidates may volunteer the names of possible examiners, and should inform the main supervisor if any special problems are likely to arise if particular examiners are appointed. Any comments will be taken into account but candidates have no right to determine the Head of School's eventual recommendation, and therefore have no right to veto any particular appointment.

10.5   Proof Reading Guidance

Proof-reading is the final stage of producing a piece of written work. The University believes that proof-reading should be carried out by the student themselves and strongly discourages the use of third party proof-readers or commercial proof-reading services. If a student feels they need assistance with their writing they should first consult the University's guidance on the use of proof readers and the rules stated therein: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/teaching/supporting-students-6126.php

10.6   Turnitin

Once the thesis is submitted for examination, it will be uploaded by the Registry to Turnitin to ensure that no instances of Academic Misconduct have taken place. The Turnitin report will be sent to the lead Supervisor for review within 2 weeks. If the Supervisor identifies that Academic Misconduct may have taken place, then they will be asked to refer the case to the Head of School for a Preliminary Investigation to be carried out. The

procedures for dealing with Academic Misconduct will be followed as per the Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Academic): [When things don't go to plan | StaffNet | The University of Aberdeen (abdn.ac.uk)](#)

If no comments are received from the Supervisor, the Turnitin report will be sent to the examiners with the thesis. If examiners identify that Academic Misconduct may have taken place, they are instructed to raise it *before* examination takes place. The case will be referred to the Head of School for Preliminary Investigation.

11.   The Examination Procedure
       (See also Appendix B)

Examination is by submission of a thesis and by oral examination.

11.1   The Thesis

Assessing the quality of the thesis is the most important of the examiners' functions. The standards to be attained for each degree are formulated in General Regulation 38 for research degrees, which requires that for the degree of **PhD, DPT, EdD, EngD, MD or ChM**, the thesis 'makes a distinct contribution to knowledge and affords evidence of originality as shown by the exercise of independent critical powers'; or for the degree of **MPhil** the thesis 'makes a contribution to knowledge and affords evidence of originality'; for a **one-year Master's** degree the thesis 'displays evidence of originality or that it is a satisfactory, orderly and critical exposition of existing knowledge within the field concerned'. As Regulation 40 of Schedule A – General Regulations for Research Degrees states, the one-year Master's degree can also be awarded with Distinction on the unanimous recommendation of the Examiners if they judge the thesis to be of outstanding quality overall at Master's level in terms of presentation, and, e.g., source discovery and interpretation, literature review, scholarly analysis, originality and/or contribution to knowledge. In applying these standards the examiners should bear in mind what can be properly achieved in the one, two or three years' full-time work (or part-time equivalents) which is required for the various degrees. Further, no thesis can be approved unless the thesis meets acceptable standards in the use of English, in quotation and citation, and in presentation. The Senate also expects examiners to pay appropriate attention to the candidate's use of evidence (the candidate's formal declaration that the work has been composed by him or herself) and that it is a record of work that has been done by him or herself.

Examiners may also wish to remind themselves of the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework Level descriptors for a Research Masters (SCQF Level 11) or Doctoral degrees (SCQF Level 12), depending on the degree to be assessed: www.scqf.org.uk/The%20Framework

Examiners are required to prepare independent written reports on their assessment of the thesis on the Independent Report Form (available at www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/teaching/postgraduate-research-1681). These *must* be prepared independently before the day of the oral examination but the examiners must also read each other's reports prior to the examination; they may be exchanged beforehand or brought to the examination, as may be convenient.

11.2.   The Oral Examination

The oral examination is an integral part of the assessment for the degree, and is not to be regarded as a mere formality by either the candidate or the examiners: the oral is the culmination of the process of examination, and both candidate and examiners must recognise it as an occasion of central importance.

The primary function of the oral examination is to allow the candidate to explain, expand, and justify his or her thesis, in response to the examiners' questions. The oral examination may be used to establish a candidate's general knowledge of the field of his or her research, to establish the extent of any collaboration, to ascertain that the candidate can work independently and lead the work of others, and to confirm that the work is indeed the candidate's own. Whilst recognising teamwork and the substantial benefits of early publication it must always be possible to track the individual work of the candidate. Examiners must be able to evaluate the candidate's *role*

in the work, the *process* of the experimentation and the resulting *understanding* of the science involved. The degree cannot be awarded for what is in essence a compendium of jointly authored articles with no indication of the candidate's original contribution.

All candidates for the award of a higher degree by research are required to submit to oral examination unless there are exceptional reasons why the oral examination should be dispensed with. In such cases, the exceptional reasons must be given in detail on the Joint Report Form and be approved by the Quality Assurance Committee; dispensing with an oral for a research degree is seldom approved. If the examiners disagree in their initial assessment of the thesis, or if they are likely to recommend re-submission, an oral *must* always be held, but a telephone-conference or a video-conference oral, although not the most satisfactory procedure, is permissible when a candidate's return to Aberdeen would be difficult or impossible.

11.3   Arrangements and the Conduct of the Oral Examination

The **internal examiner** (**or internal moderator** – paragraph 10.4 refers) is responsible for arranging the oral examination. The internal will contact the external and the candidate shortly after receipt of the thesis to arrange a date which must be mutually convenient to all the examiners and the candidate, and which should normally be **within two months** of the receipt of the thesis by the examiners. The internal examiner should keep the candidate and the Registry informed if there is to be any delay in arranging a date for the oral examination (e.g. due to the external examiner being unavailable). The internal will arrange that the supervisor will be available on the date on which the oral will be held.

Oral examinations normally take place in Aberdeen but may be held elsewhere by the mutual agreement of all the examiners and the candidate.   If, because of visa restrictions, overseas candidates must return home promptly, they are asked to make proper allowance for this when submitting their theses.

The room in which the examination is held should be in a University building. Arrangements should be made to ensure that the examination is free from external interruptions including the telephone, and relatively free from obtrusive noise.

The candidate, the examiners, the moderator if appointed, and the supervisor(s) *if invited*, are normally the only persons who may be present at the oral. The supervisor(s) should be available at the time of the oral examination but may attend only at the specific invitation of the examiners, and after consultation with the candidate; the internal examiner (or moderator) is responsible for ensuring that the supervisor(s) will be available.

The examiners may read each other's independent reports only when they are completed, and prior to the day of oral examination. Prior to the oral the examiners should agree on the lines of questioning to be followed at the oral, and who will lead on particular issues.

The internal and external examiners are equal as examiners, but, whilst the internal will convene the meeting, the internal will normally consider it courteous to defer to the external in the conduct of the examination. When two externals have been appointed they too are equal as examiners. The supervisor(s) if present may participate only at the invitation of the external(s), and only for points of clarification on specific matters.

While practice may be as flexible as is required, it is suggested an oral should not normally be less than one and a half-hours. When an examination lasts longer than two hours appropriate breaks must be agreed and formally recorded. If the viva is longer than 2 hours, then details of the breaks provided must be stated on the Examiners' Joint Report form, under the account of the viva. When it is envisaged that the examination will last more than 2 hours, breaks should be agreed at the very outset. If the examination runs longer than 1.5 hours, it should be stopped at that point and appropriate breaks agreed. Candidates can be given the option to decline a break if they wish to do so, but this must also be recorded on the Examiners' Joint Report form.

At the end of the examination the candidate should be told that the examiners will proceed to discuss their report, and should be advised when to return to hear the examiners' recommendation. The candidate and the supervisor (s) (if present) should then be asked to withdraw.

If, owing to illness or other urgent and unforeseen reason, an examiner is unable to attend the oral examination, it may be postponed to a later date. If it seems likely, however, that postponement would be a serious hardship to the candidate, the Head of School should consider whether it is appropriate to appoint an alternative examiner.

11.4   Examiners' Reports

Immediately after the oral examination the examiners should agree on a joint report, and for this must use the Joint Report Form (available at www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/teaching/postgraduate-research-1681) which should be completed on the day of the examination. They must give an account of the oral examination on this form and make a joint recommendation of the overall result as indicated on the back of the form. All examiners must sign the Joint Report Form.

The internal examiner (or moderator) will normally submit all the forms for approval (Independent Reports and Joint Report), signed, and a list of minor corrections or major changes on the 'Post-Viva Corrections Required to Thesis form, available at (www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/teaching/postgraduate-research-1681) immediately after the oral examination, and in any case must do so within three working days. The forms should be submitted to the School Administrator for Postgraduate Research who will submit them to the Postgraduate Research Examiner Report Sharepoint for the approval of the relevant Quality Assurance Committee officer.

11.5   Examiners' Recommendations

Please note that the decision made by the examiners at the oral examination is a recommendation and must be approved by a member of the Quality Assurance Committee on behalf of Senate. Candidates should be told, by the examiners, of the recommendation to be made on the day of the oral examination, but they should be advised that it is a recommendation and will be put for the approval of the Quality Assurance Committee. The Registry will issue an outcome letter to the candidate once approval has been given.

If a thesis is sustained with minor corrections (see below), the decision from the oral examination must be approved by a member of the Quality Assurance Committee, but the actual corrections themselves need only be certified by internal examiner. Further approval for award of the degree is not required at the minor correction stage. It is, of course, required in the case of major corrections.

The examiners may decide that:

(a)   the thesis be sustained for the degree being examined

(b)   the thesis be sustained for the degree being examined subject to minor corrections being made by the candidate and approved by one of the examiners, normally within three months (up to 6 months is permissible upon the recommendation of the Examiners). This recommendation should be made where minor corrections are either (a) factual, typographic, limited in extent and can be achieved immediately after the oral, or (b) where there is no doubt that the thesis is of a standard for the degree sought but corrections are needed which should not require major re-working nor re-interpretation of the intellectual content of the thesis.

(c)   the thesis be not sustained in its present form but that the candidate be given the opportunity to re-submit in a revised form for the same degree within a stated period which should not exceed 12 months

(d)   the thesis does not meet the standards for the degree being examined but does meet the standards for the award of a lower degree and the candidate be awarded the latter degree without further examination

(e)   the candidate may re-submit the thesis in a revised form for a lower degree within a stated period which shall not exceed twelve months

(f)   the thesis be not sustained

The one year Master's degree can also be awarded with Distinction on the unanimous recommendation of the examiners.

Option (b)

When the recommendation is that the thesis be sustained, subject to minor corrections, a copy of the minor corrections required by the examiners should be lodged with the Registry along with the report forms. Although this decision must be approved by the Quality Assurance Committee, only one of the examiners, *usually the internal*, is required to check that the necessary corrections have been completed (the 'Certification of Corrections' form, which should be submitted by the examiner can be downloaded from http://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/teaching/postgraduate-research-1681). Minor corrections should be carried out within three months. When corrections have been made, and certified by the internal examiner, no further approval for the award is required. A pdf copy of the final thesis must be submitted by the student to the library at cataloguing@abdn.ac.uk.

Please note, the internal moderator is **not** permitted to certify that the candidate has completed the minor corrections. In the case where there are two external examiners plus an internal moderator, one of the externals must be chosen to certify that the minor corrections have been completed.

Option (c)

Examiners will often come to the oral examination with certain doubts. One of the functions of the oral is to allow the candidate to explain, expand, and justify his or her thesis and if the candidate satisfies the examiners' reservations then the examiners may recommend that the thesis be sustained subject to minor corrections being made by the candidate. What is minor is a matter of judgement, but if it is the case that one examiner will be able to check that corrections have been made then the recommendation that the thesis be sustained subject to minor corrections may be appropriate. If, however, an examiner would require to reread the whole or a significant part of the thesis, or to check every quotation and reference again, then the recommendation should probably be that the candidate be given the opportunity to resubmit the thesis in a revised form, either for the same degree or for a lower degree, within a stated period, which should not exceed twelve months. A full account of the reasons must be provided by the examiners on the Joint Report Form. When resubmission is recommended, the examiners should also make recommendations about the conditions for resubmission, and must provide the candidate with a written statement about what is required to bring the thesis up to an appropriate standard for the award of the degree. A copy of this statement should be lodged with the Registry along with the report forms, and this statement will be given to the candidate. The candidate should consult with his or her supervisor when revising the thesis. The candidate and the examiners should not be in contact during this time.

11.6   Resubmission of a Thesis

Only one resubmission of a thesis will be permitted, irrespective of the degree being considered. The resubmitted thesis is submitted to the Registry. Resubmission requires re-examination of the thesis by all the examiners who make a joint report using the Resubmission Joint Report Form (available at www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/teaching/postgraduate-research-1681). Normally, all those appointed to examine the original submission will be required to examine the re-submitted thesis.

The re-submitted thesis should be judged against the corrections stipulated as necessary by the examiners following the oral examination for the first submission. No further criticism of other material or aspects of the thesis passed as satisfactory at the first examination can be introduced at a later stage.

Following re-submission the examiners may recommend that (a) the thesis be sustained, (b) the thesis be sustained with minor corrections, (c) the thesis does not meet the requirements for the degree being examined, but that it does have merits which satisfy the standards required for the award of a lower degree appropriate to the discipline in which the candidate is registered or (d) that the thesis be not sustained. (The one year Master's degree can also be awarded with Distinction on the unanimous recommendation of the examiners.) The

examiners cannot recommend that the candidate be given another opportunity to resubmit in a revised or modified form as a thesis may only be submitted twice.

Where a thesis has been resubmitted, a second oral examination will be held only if the Quality Assurance Committee on behalf of Senate approves a proposal to that effect, normally on the recommendation of the examiners. The examiners should clearly state in their first Joint Report that a second oral is being recommended. The re-submitted thesis should be judged against the corrections stipulated as necessary by the examiners following the oral examination for the first submission. No further criticism of other material or aspects of the thesis passed as satisfactory at the first examination can be introduced at a later stage. However, if a second oral examination is deemed necessary, the thesis as a whole, and not just the parts that were corrected, will be the subject of the oral. Thus, candidates should therefore be prepared to answer questions on any part of their thesis.

11.7 Consideration of Examiners' Reports and Notification of Outcome

The examiners' recommendation is considered by a member of the Quality Assurance Committee who has delegated power to recommend to the Senate whether a thesis be sustained and the relevant degree be conferred or whether the thesis be referred or failed. Once the recommendation of the examiners has been approved by a member of the Quality Assurance Committee the Registry will write to the candidate informing him/her of the outcome of the examination.

11.8 Examination Procedures for Joint Degrees with Curtin University

Joint PhDs under Alliance agreement with Curtin University require students whose home institution is Aberdeen to undertake a Viva examination by two internal examiners – one from each institution – and two external examiners – both external to Aberdeen and Curtin.

Students studying under this agreement whose home institution is Curtin may not require an intenral examiner from Curtin. Instead, Curtin home students are permitted to be examined by three examiners who are all external to both institutions, plus one examiner from Aberdeen.

Please note that the Viva examination is expected to proceed according to the normal procedures for examination of research degrees at the University of Aberdeen, with the possible outcomes from the examination remain as they are for all research degrees.

All four examiners must prepare independent reports prior to the viva and must sign off the joint report. The report paperwork should be submitted to the PGR Examiner Sharepoint system for QAC approval, in the same way as is done for all research degrees.

11.9 Roles within the Examination Procedure

Head of School
- Nominates examiners after consultation with the candidate's supervisor

Internal Examiner
- Arranges oral examination with external examiner and candidate (ideally within 2 months of thesis being submitted), and makes sure supervisor is available on the day.
- Discusses with the external examiner whether to invite the supervisor to the oral examination .
- Informs the candidate of any delays in oral examination.
- Ensures University procedures are followed:
    - o Makes sure Independent Reports are completed and exchange before the oral examination
    - o Makes sure that the candidate is informed on the day of the recommendation to be made by the examiners.

- o   Makes sure Joint Report is completed on day of oral examination and submitted to the Registry within three working days of the oral examination, along with both Independent Reports and corrections required, if required. The internal must ensure that the paperwork is completed and signed by both examiners.
- Signs off minor corrections as complete.
- Responsible for liaising with the external if any issues arise with reports, i.e. missing signatures etc.

Internal Moderator
- The Internal Moderator is required for Quality Assurance purposes and is there to ensure that the University's procedures are followed. The internal moderator will perform all the tasks stated above for the internal examiner, except examining the thesis.
- Please note, the internal moderator is **not** permitted to sign off a candidate's minor corrections. This must be one of the externals. The internal moderator must ensure that one external is designated to check the minor corrections and sign off the appropriate paperwork.

Registry
- Send nomination form to School for completion upon receipt of Intention to Submit.
- Send thesis to examiners upon receipt (the thesis will be sent as soon as possible from when it is submitted, providing the nomination of examiners has been approved).
- Issues letter detailing the outcome of the oral examination to the candidate from oral examination once reports are approved. A further letter will be issued once a minor corrections form is received from the internal examiner certifying that the corrections have been made.
- Will liaise with the internal examiner/moderator if reports/corrections forms remain outstanding for longer than the time frame for submission stipulated above.
- Receives reports from internal examiner/moderator post-oral examination and seeks QAC approval for the recommendation.
- Liaises with internal examiner/moderator if there are any issues arising from the reports. For example, if reports have been submitted without signatures, the Registry will contact the internal and ask that signed reports be supplied. It would be for the Internal to then liaise with the external.

12.   Graduation

In-person graduation ceremonies normally take place in mid-June and at the end of November. Posters are circulated to Schools in March with details of the ceremonies, and graduation application forms can be downloaded from the Student Portal or, if that is not possible, on request by emailing graduation@abdn.ac.uk are available from the Student Reception. Students should check the graduation website to find out the exact deadline for returning their application to graduate. The deadline for summer ceremonies is usually mid April and for winter ceremonies is mid-October. A fee is payable by all graduands who decide to appear "*in person*" at the graduation ceremony (currently £45). A late fee is payable by students who apply to graduate after the deadline. Students should not wait until they have been examined to apply to graduate.

It is the **responsibility of each student** to complete an Application to Graduate Form and to decide whether to graduate *in absentia* or wait until the next in-person graduation ceremony. The degree will not be awarded until such time as the student formally graduates, i.e. if a student completes the requirements of their degree programme in October but decides not to graduate until the following July (or if the student is not permitted to graduate due to a financial debt to the University), the degree certificate will state the latter date.

In absentia graduations take place in November, February, May and June and application forms are available from the Student Portal or by request from graduation@abdn.ac.uk. There is a £10 fee for graduating *in absentia*. Certificate and Diploma students can only go through for their award in absentia, but they must still complete an Application to Graduate form.

If a student owes the University money for any reason (fees, rent, library fines for unreturned books, etc.) the student will <u>not</u> be permitted to graduate or receive an award, so they should ensure all debts are cleared.

Further details on Graduations, including the schedule of Graduation Ceremonies, in absentia dates, procedures on the day of in-person Graduation Ceremonies, gown hire and Graduation photographs are available at www.abdn.ac.uk/graduation

Students should note that they will not be permitted to graduate if they owe any money to the University or if they have not returned all books to the Library.

Any enquiries regarding graduations should be directed to the Registry:
Telephone: +44 (0)1224 273505; E-mail: graduation@abdn.ac.uk

13.   If Things go Wrong

13.1   Problems and Difficulties

The University aims to provide a welcoming and supportive environment for its postgraduate students. However, from time to time students will encounter academic problems and difficulties. In the first instance any problems/difficulties should be raised with the Supervisor. If this is not appropriate, students should see their Head of Discipline/School. If problems continue, students may wish to contact the Dean of the Postgraduate Research School .

13.2   Policy on Appeals and Complaints

The University's *Policy on Appeals* and *Complaints Handling Procedure* can be accessed at www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/study/appeals-and-complaints-procedures:

In regard to appeals, the policy indicates that appeals will only be considered where:

> i) it is believed that the University's procedures were not followed;
> **or**
> ii) it is believed that the person or body making the decision did not have the authority to do so;
> **or**
> iii) it is believed that the person or body making the decision did not act impartially;
> ***and***
> iv) a student considers that they have suffered, or could suffer, material disadvantage

Those involved in considering academic appeals will not review the question of academic judgement, which is a matter solely for the person or committee that has made the academic judgement.

In particular, students' attention is drawn to section 3 of the *Policy on Appeals*:

> If a student believes that a medical condition or other personal circumstances have affected their performance in an assessment or prevented them from taking an examination or meeting a deadline for submission of coursework they must notify the Head of the relevant School(s) immediately. This must be done in writing, not more than three days after the date of submission.

Where a student has not given notice of such extenuating or mitigating circumstances within the three day timescale, they cannot be accepted as evidence in support of an appeal or complaint unless a satisfactory explanation for the delay in providing the information can be given. If those circumstances are raised for the first time at the Initial Stage (i.e. with the Head of School or Service) the Head of School or Service (or their nominee) will decide whether it is appropriate to take them into account.

The effect of this paragraph is that appeals which are based on illness (which must be certified by a medical practitioner) and/or other personal circumstances normally will not be considered unless notified to the Head of the relevant School within three days after the date on which a student submitted or appeared for the assessment concerned. This is to ensure that the examiners, including the External Examiner(s), have all information available to them at the time of confirming a course result or recommending an award.

In regard to Complaints, the *Complaints Handling Procedure* states that a complaint is*:*

> An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more individuals about the standard of service, action or lack of action by or on behalf of the University.
>
> A complaint may relate to:
>
> • the quality and standard of service
> • failure to provide a service
> • the quality of facilities or learning resources
> • treatment by or attitude of a staff member, student or contractor
> • inappropriate behaviour by a staff member, student or contractor
> • the failure of the University to follow an appropriate administrative process
> • dissatisfaction with the University's policy, although it is recognised that policy is set at the discretion of the University

The first stage of either an Appeal or Complaint is for the student to raise their concern as soon as possible with the relevant member of staff within the related School or Service. The University anticipates that by ensuring that all matters are considered informally at an early stage, problems can and will be resolved quickly and effectively at a local level. Please see the *Policy on Appeals* the *Complaints Handling Procedure* for details of the timeframes for raising concerns and subsequent steps if the matter cannot be resolved informally.

13.3   Plagiarism and the Code of Practice on Student Discipline

The University's Code of Practice on Student Discipline is available at:
https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/documents/academic-quality-handbook/Code%20of%20Practice%20in%20Student%20Discipline%20(Academic).pdf

This Code outlines such issues as examination offences, including cheating in prescribed degree assessments. ***For the purposes of this Code "cheating" includes plagiarism***.

The Senate-approved definition of plagiarism is the use, without adequate acknowledgement, of the intellectual work of another person in work submitted for assessment. A student cannot be found to have committed plagiarism where it can be shown that the student has taken all reasonable care to avoid representing the work of others as his/her own.

If the examiners of a research degree, having read the thesis and having heard the candidate's oral defence believe that the work reported in the thesis is not the candidate's own work or that the thesis in whole or in part has not been composed by the candidate, they will inform the candidate that plagiarism is suspected and that no decision can be made. In this situation the Internal and External Examiners role is restricted to the presentation of evidence and they will be required to produce a detailed written report. The Examiners' report forms, the detailed report and copies of the thesis should be passed to the Head of School. The Examiners should also send the Registry a copy of the report forms with a note that the Head of School is investigating the allegation with the student. The Head of School should then investigate the allegation under the Code of Practice on Student Discipline. This will include meeting with the student to discuss the allegation. If, after investigation, the Head of

School believes that plagiarism may have taken place, he/she will send full details to the registry for formal investigation by a Vice-Principal.

14.   Services and Support for Students

14.1.   Student Feedback

The University conducts an annual on-line questionnaire that Research students are asked to complete. It is designed to help the University enhance the quality of postgraduate research degree provision by collecting feedback from current research students.

Information arising from the questionnaire will be considered by Senate, and discussed with individual Schools.

Students can also feedback any issues that arise to their Student Representative within the Students' Association.

14.2   Library Services

The University Library is one of the largest and best equipped in Scotland and employs the latest technology for both staff and student use. It has well over a million volumes, ranging from ancient papyri to the latest electronic resources on a wide range of subjects. Most of the books and journals can be freely borrowed and there are ample reading areas where students can study.

Information about library services can be found at www.abdn.ac.uk/library/

14.3   Computing Services

IT Services provide central computing facilities and services. Before using University computing facilities, students must **register** to obtain their personal *username* and *password* as part of the eRegistration process. They will retain the same username throughout their time at the University but they will have to re-register at the start of each academic year.

It is essential that all research students register for a University email account as without it they will miss out on important information sent to the research postgraduates email mailbase.

Information about computing services can be found at: www.abdn.ac.uk/it

14.4   Students' Association

The Aberdeen University Students' Association (AUSA) exists to promote the interests of all matriculated students and to communicate on their behalf with the University authorities on matters affecting students. The AUSA also provides a wide range of services. Full details can be found at www.ausa.org.uk

14.5   Student Support Services

Student Support Services is the umbrella organisation for various areas: University Counselling Service; University Chaplaincy; Wardenial staff; and the Student Advice and Support Centre. The latter office provides advice and support for international students and students with disabilities, and advice for all students on welfare matters.

Further details about Student Support Services can be found at www.abdn.ac.uk/students

14.6   Students with Disabilities

The University of Aberdeen welcomes disabled students and is committed to improving access to courses, facilities, buildings and social life.

If you are a disabled student or have a particular impairment or medical condition, you may have specific queries relating to the accessibility of the University and its courses. You are welcome to contact a Student Support Officer/Disability Adviser for general discussion or with specific queries relating to your personal circumstances.

The University's Student Support Officers/Disability Advisers provide general support to all students and specifically to disabled students. In addition to general issues, they can help answer queries when students are considering applying to the University, discuss specific arrangements with students once they have accepted a place and liaise with academic and non-academic departments to ensure that, where possible, these requirements are met. They can also advise students regarding applications for a Disabled Students' Allowance. They also advise members of University staff on disability-related matters.

Further information can be found at www.abdn.ac.uk/disability

14.7   Student Guidance and Learner Support

Additional general information about student guidance and learner support is available on the web at www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/teaching/Section5.pdf

15.   Council Tax

This is a local tax payable to the City of Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Councils. The tax depends on the value of the property in which you live. Most **full-time** students do not pay Council Tax, because they live in accommodation occupied entirely by students, or because they live with their parents, who pay the Council Tax on the family home. **However, if you are a part-time student, or if you share accommodation with other adults who are not students, you could have to pay some, or all, of your property's Council Tax.**

The University routinely provides Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils with confirmation of its full-time students' status. If you have registered, and need confirmation that you are a full-time student so that you can claim exemption from Council Tax, please ask at the Student Reception in the University Office.

Part-time students and students in an Extension Period are not usually entitled to exemption and will be liable to pay Council Tax (note that all students are registered as Part time during an Extension Period, regardless of whether they were full time or part time during their supervised study). However, from September 2005, Aberdeen City Council has agreed to regard postgraduate research students who have previously been full-time whilst under supervised study as continuing to be full-time in the 12 month period following conclusion of their registration for supervised study. Provided that the University can certify that they are undertaking study of at least 21 hours per week for a period of 24 weeks or more these students will then be exempt from paying Council Tax for that period. Aberdeenshire Council, so far, does not offer this concession. If a student submits **before** the completion of the 12 months following the conclusion of their registration for supervised study, certification can only be given up until the date of submission. After that date students are regarded as being under examination and not engaged in writing up; thus the University cannot certify that they are engaged in study of at least 21 hours per week.

This applies only to students who were full-time throughout their supervised period of study, and who have paid fees at the standard full-time rate throughout their period of study.   Students in this category must complete with their supervisor an application form for Council tax Exemption available at www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/study/changes-to-studies

APPENDICES TO THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR RESEACH STUDENTS, SUPERVISORS, HEADS OF SCHOOL, DEAN OF POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH SCHOOL AND GRADUATE SCHOOL OFFICERS

A. Responsibilities of Graduate School Officers, Dean of Postgraduate Research School, Heads of School, Supervisors and Research Students

The following describes the responsibilities of the Senate and its Quality Assurance Committee, Schools and Supervisors as regards supervising postgraduate students who are taking a degree by research, and the parallel responsibilities of students. It does not state or replace regulations, but does attempt to summarise the University's practice.

A.1 Senate and the Quality Assurance Committee

Senate has ultimate responsibility for the assurance of the quality of the University's courses and programmes of study and for maintenance of the academic standards of the associated awards, but the powers prescribed under the various higher degree regulations are exercised on its behalf by the Quality Assurance Committee. The Committee has in turn delegated to Graduate School Officers the day-to-day responsibility for several administrative functions.

Members of the Quality Assurance Committee are responsible for:-

- recommending the appointment of examiners on the nomination of Heads of School
- receiving the reports of examiners
- approving degree results in the light of examiners' reports and recommend to the Senate the conferral of awards as appropriate.

A.2 Graduate School Officers

Graduate School Officers have been appointed to represent each area of study of the University. Through Postgraduate Research School they deal with all administrative matters relating to the admission, progress and examination of individual students.

Graduate School Officers are responsible for:-

- monitoring the Postgraduate Assessment Forms in regard to students' progress
- considering changes of degree and/or subject
- considering changes of status (e.g. registration from full-time to part-time and vice-versa or suspension of study)
- attending to queries, problems and complaints, either referred to them by Heads of School or Supervisors, or raised directly by students

A.3 Dean of the Postgraduate Research School

The Dean of the Postgraduate Research School oversees all aspects of the administration of the Postgraduate Research School. They are responsible for oversight of the delivery of training, and the maintenance of standards and for representing the interests of postgraduate students in the senior committees of the University.

Dean of the Postgraduate Research School or their representatives are responsible for:-

- promoting excellence in postgraduate teaching and research
- ensuring that a first class structure for postgraduate student training and assessment is provided
- overseeing comprehensive postgraduate training including transferable and generic skills, and research techniques

- acting as a central repository of information, maintaining important databases including courses, supervisors, research project areas, postgraduate students' details, studentships and other sources of funding
- ensuring facilities and support for postgraduate students are provided
- ensuring that training for supervisors is provided
- overseeing the management of postgraduate research student's training and supervision
- overseeing monitoring of research students' progress
- overseeing marketing and recruitment in consultation with the Student Recruitment and Admissions Service.

A.4   Heads of School

Heads of School are in charge of all matters pertaining to the running of their Schools, but they may delegate their powers in respect of postgraduate students, as appropriate, and seek the advice of a School Postgraduate Committee (or equivalent).

Heads of School or Heads of Discipline or their representatives are responsible for:-

- responding to all enquiries relating to postgraduate research in their School
- receiving applications for admission and recommending acceptance or rejection and any conditions of entry
- nominating Supervisors in the light of students' interests and the School expertise
- applying the Postgraduate Structured Management Frameworks to meet the needs of their School and ensure that research students and their Supervisors are issued with the relevant Framework (i.e. for full-time or part-time study)
- facilitating students obtaining research training, language tuition, and necessary skills
- approving facilities, support and materials as needed for postgraduate research
- ensuring that Supervisors and research students are acquainted with all relevant safety regulations and procedures, and that research students receive appropriate training and supervision when following any course of action or using any technique which might be deemed hazardous or dangerous
- ensuring that disabled students do not receive less favourable treatment and that relevant reasonable adjustments are made. These should be discussed with the University's Senior Disability Adviser
- monitoring students' progress through the six-monthly Postgraduate Assessment Forms and meet with research students deemed as "not satisfactory" with regard to progress
- monitoring supervision and ensuring that Supervisors perform their duties appropriately
- attending to queries, problems and complaints either referred to them by Supervisors, or raised directly by students
- recommending changes of degree registration and/or subject
- recommending changes of status (from full-time to part-time and vice-versa or suspension of study)
- recommending changes of Supervisor and/or discipline
- nominating internal and external examiners
- recommending that a candidate's registration be terminated, where appropriate.

A.5   Lead Supervisors

Lead supervisors have primary responsibility for providing guidance to research students in the choice of a suitable field for research or topic for a dissertation, bearing in mind that the research must be capable of completion within the period of study allocated to the degree. Supervisors should seek to encourage choice of a research topic as early as possible in the student's period of research.

Lead supervisors are responsible for providing guidance about the nature and techniques of research, about the standard expected for the degree, about the planning of the research programme, about literature and sources and about required attendance at taught classes, about the copyright implications of working on certain subject areas, in particular given the requirement for the electronic publication of theses, and about the embargoes of

work where publication would have commercial, professional, legal or ethical consequences again in particular given the requirement for the electronic publication of theses.

Supervisors must:-

1.   Quality Assurance

1.1   know the regulations governing higher degrees
1.2   attend training courses in supervision as appropriate
1.3   comply with the requirements of the University's Postgraduate Structured Management Framework, and School-specific procedures, in relation to the training, supervision and monitoring of research students
1.4   submit bi-annual Postgraduate Assessment Forms to the Head of School, and meet with the Head of School and research student where the student is deemed as "not satisfactory" with regard to progress
1.5   ensure that their workload is such as to allow adequate time to be given to each supervised student.
1.6   advise the Head of School of any lack of resources which may prevent the student from completing his or her study within the period of study
1.7   keep the Head of School informed about progress or potential problems
1.8   advise on extensions of study or suspension of study as appropriate

2.   On admission of the student

2.1   arrange a meeting between the student and the supervisory team to take place as soon as possible after the student's arrival in Aberdeen
2.2   advise the student on the choice of research topic in the light of what is appropriate for the degree and the present state of knowledge, and outline the scope of the project at the initial supervisory meetings, in line with what is detailed in section x
2.3   advise on a topic which can be satisfactorily completed within the specified time and within the specified word limit
2.4   give guidance about planning the research programme, about literature and sources, and about requisite skills
2.5   advise the student on regulations governing research degrees and on the monitoring procedures in place and the University's Postgraduate Structured Management Framework
2.6   ensure that the research student has the opportunity to become acquainted with all relevant safety regulations and procedures, and that he or she receives appropriate training and supervision when following any course of action or using any technique which might be deemed hazardous or dangerous.
2.7   offer welfare support where required, and if necessary advise that the student contact Student Support Services as appropriate
2.8   ensure that disabled students do not receive less favourable treatment and that relevant reasonable adjustments are made. These should be discussed with the University's Senior Disability Adviser.
2.9   ensure that a student from overseas has the necessary linguistic and other skills to ensure profitable use of his or her time and experience, and take steps to assist those in need of support to obtain help from the appropriate University section

3.   During the research degree programme

3.1   Support

3.1.1 maintain regular contact through supervisory meetings, or by electronic means if the student is off-campus for any periods (what is expected is defined more closely by Schools in the light of the demands of the subject)
3.1.2 maintain reasonable accessibility so that advice may be offered at other times, and arrange an alternative point of contact when away for protracted periods.
3.1.3 request written work on a regular basis, as appropriate

3.1.4 return such work with constructive criticism within a time period to be agreed with the student that does not impede the student's progress

3.1.5 work collaboratively with other supervisors when involved in a supervisory team

3.1.6 work collaboratively with advisers

3.1.7 agree notes of formal meetings with the student

3.1.8 give detailed advice about completion dates, and about pacing the work so that the whole thesis may be submitted within the scheduled period (it is expected that students will normally submit their thesis within their period of registration)

3.1.9 advise on other members of staff or experts in the field whom the student might consult

3.1.10 assist and give guidance for student to complete assessments as required by monitoring procedures

3.1.11 encourage and arrange, as appropriate, for the student to present papers to graduate seminars, staff seminars and conferences

3.1.12 ensure that appropriate steps are taken to find alternative arrangements should other members of the supervisory team, i.e. assistant supervisors or advisers, need to be replaced

3.1.13 ensuring that undocumented absences are reported in accordance with monitoring procedures

3. 2 Ethical Issues

3.2.1 Explain best research practice and ethical considerations as early as possible in the student's studies

3.2.2 advise on ethical issues relating to the conduct of the research (including how to obtain the approval of relevant ethics committees if appropriate)

3.2.3 advise on honest and fair dealing with the work of others quoted or paraphrased in the written work of the student

3.2.4 consult with the student on the appropriate recognition of the student's contribution to research publications, taking into account the University's policy on Intellectual Property Rights (Section 11 refers).

3.3 Assessing

3.3.1 ensure that the student has adequate opportunities to become aware of the standards required, and the standards being attained

3.3.2 advise on whether and when a student should request a transfer to a higher degree (e.g. MSc to PhD)

3.3.3 advise whenever progress or standards of work are below what are generally expected and the implications of unsatisfactory progress (e.g. transfer to a lower degree or termination of studies) as soon as the issue arises

3.4 Skills training

3.4.1 undertake a skills audit with their student at the beginning of their programme of study, and annually thereafter throughout their prescribed period of study to determine the student's research, transferable and generic skills requirements.

3.4.2 determine what training in research methods and skills and further education in the subject are required by the student, and seek approval from the Head of School/Discipline for proposals to obtain the necessary training and support, as part of Personal Development Planning

3.4.3 Ensure that the student has access to the required skills training and development opportunities and agree with the student a programme of skills training

4. Nearing completion

4.1 advise on career and professional development

4.2 discuss CV-writing and job applications, and direct the student to skills training courses and the Careers & Appointments Service

4.3 try to ensure by advice and encouragement that the thesis is submitted within the specified time and within the specified word limit

4.4 receive and comment on the final draft of the thesis

4.5 offer advice and training as required for the oral examination

4.6 submit nominations for the internal and external examiners to the Head of School

4.7 assist research students throughout their period of supervised research and for up to twelve months thereafter during the writing up of the thesis (or to completion if sooner)

4.8 assist student appropriately during the period of corrections following the student's viva, both in the case of minor corrections or a full resubmission.

A.6 Co-Supervisors

Assistant supervisors have an equal role and responsibility to the lead supervisor with respect to supervision of the student's work; thus a co-supervisor should participate in much of the responsibilities outlined for lead supervisors in section A5. However, it is normally the principal supervisor's task to deal with the administrative aspects of supervision, such as ensuring that monitoring forms are completed. One of the main responsibilities of the assistant supervisor is to act as temporary lead supervisor in the event of the departure or absence, or long term illness of the lead supervisor, or in the event of a breakdown in supervisor relationship between the lead supervisor and the student. Where appropriate, and with agreement between supervisors, assistant supervisors may share administrative duties of the lead supervisor.

Assistant supervisors should be present at the early meetings in which the initial scope of the project is established, and will be expected to review and provide feedback on assessment submitted by the student for monitoring or progression purposes throughout the student's study. Assistant supervisors should normally be present at supervisory meetings with the student, but, in the event that he or she is unable to attend in person, they must keep informed of the outcome of meetings.

A.7 Advisers

Advisers will not normally have supervisory input into a student's research and need not be a subject-specialist in the area that the student is researching. The primary function of an adviser is to fulfil the role of someone that the student can approach for pastoral support and assist in helping the student to contact the appropriate student support service if required. An adviser provides another point of contact other than the supervisor who the student can approach to discuss any concerns or seek advice on a confidential basis, in particular, but not exclusively, when the supervisor is absent. Advisers will also be expected to have knowledge of University regulations governing research degrees and will be able to advise students on the correct procedures and offer guidance in regard to changes in terms of study, i.e. suspensions, withdrawals etc. Schools may have further specific requirements of advisers.

Advisers must:

- not be someone directly involved in the student's research project and not direct a student's research
- meet with the student as soon as possible after the commencement of their study
- provide pastoral support and liaise on behalf of students with relevant University staff as appropriate (eg the Registry, the University's or School's Disability Co-ordinator)
- the adviser should meet the student at about six-monthly intervals minimum (more often if wished).
- advise on administrative procedures in regard to changes in a student's terms of study
- maintain an oversight of a student's progress through their degree and discuss any potential concerns with the student supervisor(s)

- become familiar and keep up-to-date with the University's policies and procedures with respect to the provision of academic and personal support to students: this includes becoming familiar with related University services (eg Students' Association (SA); Counselling Service; Old Aberdeen Medical Practice; Careers Service; the Chaplaincy Centre; the Disabilities Adviser), and the University's various codes of practice and guidance notes (eg with respect to discipline and academic appeals)

- ensure appropriate steps are taken to find alternative arrangements should the lead supervisor need to be replaced, in the case that there are no assistant supervisors appointed who can take on the role of lead supervisor on a temporary basis. In the case where an assistant supervisor is able to take on the role of lead, the adviser must retain an oversight of the process of appointing a new supervisor to ensure that it is completed appropriately and in a timely fashion.

A.8   Research Students

Research students will greatly benefit from the advice and direction of good supervisors, but **ultimately are responsible for their own research and their thesis**. The University strongly advises students to submit their thesis before the expiry of their period of supervised study, and degree regulations require that they do so within twelve months from the end of this period. The timely completion of the degree will greatly enhance employment prospects. Extensions beyond the normal period of supervised study plus twelve months must be applied for, and are not granted without good reason.

Research students must:-

1.   Quality Assurance

1.1   be familiar with the requirements of the University's Postgraduate Structured Management Framework and discuss these with their supervisor*(s)* as appropriate

1.2   discuss the six-monthly Postgraduate Assessment Forms with their supervisor*(s)* and counter-sign as appropriate

1.3   submit six-monthly Postgraduate Assessment Forms to their Head of School, and if deemed as "not satisfactory" with regard to progress meet with their Head of School and supervisor

1.4   submit yearly supervision questionnaires to the Registry (at annual registration)

1.5   recognise that although the University aims to provide a welcoming and supportive environment for the conduct of research studies by postgraduate students, from time to time students will encounter academic problems and difficulties. In the first instance they should raise them with their supervisor(s), but if this is not appropriate they should see their Head of School or the Dean of the Postgraduate Research School. Particularly when their Head of School is also their supervisor they may wish to contact the Postgraduate Research School.

1.6   accept that when a student's research interests diverge from what s/he originally intended, it might be appropriate to be allocated to a new supervisor (although all that may be necessary is to look for informal advice from other members of the University); again the correct approach is to discuss the situation with the current supervisor, then the Head of School/Discipline, and then the Postgraduate Research School.

2.   On admission

2.1   Register at the start of their studies and do so annually **even if they are studying off-campus or are part-time**

2.2   define the area of their research in consultation with their supervisor(s)

2.3   agree a research topic with their supervisor(s) as soon as practicable

2.4   seek approval for their research topic via their supervisor(s) or Head of School

2.5   ensure that they have understood the University's guidelines on good research practice (see Section 9)

2.6   ensure that they have been introduced to their Personal Development Plan

2.7   ensure that they are thoroughly acquainted with all relevant safety regulations and procedures, and have received training before following any course of action or using any technique which might be deemed hazardous or dangerous

3. During the research degree programme

3.1 Studies

3.1.1 agree a timetable for the conduct of their research
3.1.2 maintain progress in accordance with the plan agreed with their supervisor
3.1.3 agree a schedule of meetings with their supervisor(s), write up notes of these meetings and agree them with their supervisor(s)
3.1.4 discuss work and progress with their supervisor(s)
3.1.5 submit written work as and when required by their supervisor
3.1.6 keep a written record of their work in a research notebook that can be reviewed
3.1.7 take the initiative with their supervisor(s) in defining and raising problems or difficulties
3.1.8 attend courses as specified by their School with the agreement of their supervisor(s) and/or Head of School/Discipline
3.1.9 agree with their supervisor(s) a plan and timetable for the writing of the thesis

3.2 Ethical Issues

3.2.1 obtain approval of their research from ethics committees where appropriate
3.2.2 consult with their supervisor on the appropriate recognition of their contribution to research publications in accordance with the University's policy on Intellectual Property Rights (see Section C)
3.2.3 attend training on ethical issues

3.3 Skills Training

3.3.1 define their training and educational needs and discuss them with their supervisor(s), as part of PDP planning
3.3.2 Undertake, with their supervisor(s), a skills audit at the beginning of their programme of study, and annually thereafter throughout their prescribed period of study to determine research, transferable and generic skills requirements.
3.3.3 Attend a programme of skills training as agreed with their supervisor(s)

4. Nearing Completion

4.1 be aware that the thesis is their own work and responsibility
4.2 accept that while their supervisor(s) will give advice, constructive feedback and other guidance, they must take ultimate responsibility for the final version of their thesis
4.3 decide whether or not to accept any advice or suggestions given by the supervisor(s)
4.4 decide when to give notice of intention to submit, taking due account of their supervisor's opinion (which is, however, only advisory)
4.4 present the final draft of their thesis to their supervisor
4.5 ensure timely submission of the thesis for examination.
4.6 seek advice on preparation for the oral examination.

B.   INFORMATION FOR RESEARCH STUDENTS ON THESIS SUBMISSION AND EXAMINATION

IMPORTANT WEB-LINKS
- Code of Practice for Research Students: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/teaching/research-students-6125.php
- Library guide to presentation of thesis, and requirements for final submission: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/library/documents/guides/qggen009.pdf
- Information on graduation: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/graduation/
- Guidance on the submission of theses via Turnitin: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/pgrs/pgr-handbook/submission-of-theses-85.php

SUBMISSION OF THESIS (prior to examination) VIA TURNITIN
From AY 2022/23 (September) all research degree theses submitted to Registry for examination will be uploaded by the Registry to Turnitin, prior to being sent to examiners, to ensure that no instances of Academic Misconduct have taken place. The similarity report will be reviewed to ensure any % match identified and the context of any matches within the topic and/or discipline 'norms' are acceptable and whether they infringe plagiarism standards. Please ensure you have read the guidance linked above.

For examination, a pdf copy of the thesis should be submitted to Registry via postgraduate@abdn.ac.uk

THINGS TO REMEMBER DURING EXAMINATION PROCESS
- **Make sure your contact details, including term-time address, are kept up to-date.** You can change your address through the Student Hub.
- **Regularly check your University email address.** Communication regarding your examination will be made through this email address.
- **Submit Application to Graduate.** Students are advised to apply early for graduation and not to wait for confirmation that thesis has been sustained. Applications to Graduate can be downloaded from Student Hub, on request to graduation@abdn.ac.uk or visiting the Infohub. Deadlines for applying to graduate can be found at the link given above. A late fee is applicable for submissions after the deadlines.

IT ACCOUNT
Your computer account will be closed after completion of your degree, i.e. when the thesis has been sustained and minor corrections completed. This will be the date when the Registry sends the letter confirming completion and eligibility to graduate. Students are granted Associate Student status, which will remain in place for a period of three months or 2 weeks prior to graduation, whichever is shorter. Your ID card, IT account and email will remain active for this period. Your email account will remain active for 30 days following the cessation of the Associate Student Status. Please ensure that you have any emails you require to keep or files saved on a University computer saved elsewhere.

DELAYS IN SCHEDULING VIVA
Examiners are asked that the viva be scheduled within two months of submission of the thesis to the Registry. However, delays in scheduling the viva can happen, depending on availability. If there is a delay in scheduling the viva, the Internal Examiner, or Moderator if appointed, has responsibility for making the viva arrangements. He or she will keep you informed of any delays.

VIVA BY TELE-CONFERENCE OR VIDEO CONFERENCE
Holding a viva by video or teleconference is not the ideal situation, but if you are unable to return to Aberdeen for the viva it may be permissible, and this should be arranged with the Internal Examiner/Moderator.
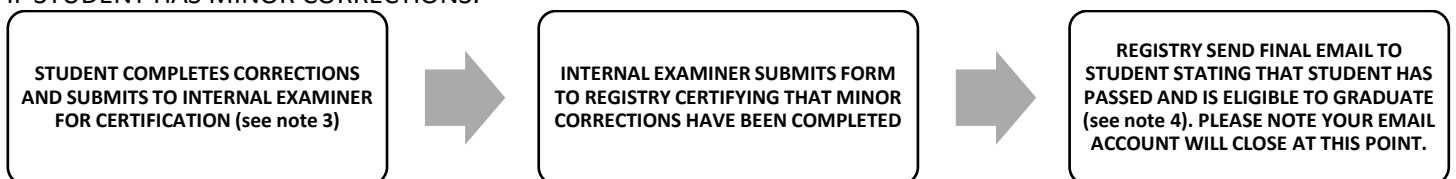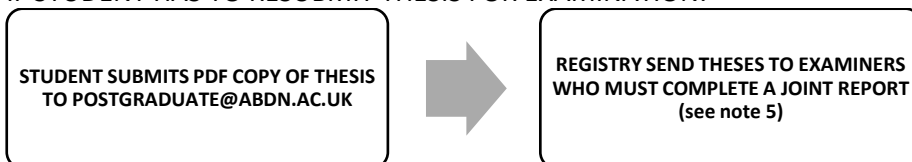
THESIS EXAMINATION PROCESS

NOMINATION

ONE MONTH BEFORE SUBMISSION STUDENT SUBMITS INTENTION TO SUBMIT FORM TO REGISTRY → **REGISTRY SEND NOMINATION OF EXAMINERS FORM TO SCHOOL** → **SUPERVISOR AND HEAD OF SCHOOL COMPLETE NOMINATION OF EXAMINERS FORM AND RETURN TO REGISTRY FOR POSTGRADUATE OFFICER APPROVAL**

SUBMISSION

STUDENT SUBMITS A PDF COPY OF THESIS TO POSTGRADUATE@ABDN.AC.UK. → **REGISTRY UPLOADS THESIS TO TURNITIN AND REPORT SENT TO SUPERVISORS FOR COMMENTS (2 WEEKS) .** → **THESIS IS SENT TO EXAMINERS. INTERNAL EXAMINER /MODERATOR CONTACTS SUPERVISOR AND STUDENT TO SCHEDULE VIVA**

EXAMINATION

STUDENT HAS VIVA AND EXAMINERS CONFIRM RECOMMENDATION TO STUDENT ON THE SAME DAY → **INTERNAL EXAMINER/MODERATOR SUBMIT EXAMINER REPORTS FOR APPROVAL** → **FORMS PUT TO A MEMBER OF THE QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE FOR APPROVAL(see note 1)**

OUTCOME

REGISTRY SENDS CONFIRMATION OF OUTCOME OF VIVA TO STUDENT (see note 2)

NEXT STEPS

IF STUDENT HAS MINOR CORRECTIONS:

STUDENT COMPLETES CORRECTIONS AND SUBMITS TO INTERNAL EXAMINER FOR CERTIFICATION (see note 3) → **INTERNAL EXAMINER SUBMITS FORM TO REGISTRY CERTIFYING THAT MINOR CORRECTIONS HAVE BEEN COMPLETED** → **REGISTRY SEND FINAL EMAIL TO STUDENT STATING THAT STUDENT HAS PASSED AND IS ELIGIBLE TO GRADUATE (see note 4). PLEASE NOTE YOUR EMAIL ACCOUNT WILL CLOSE AT THIS POINT.**

IF STUDENT HAS TO RESUBMIT THESIS FOR EXAMINATION:

STUDENT SUBMITS PDF COPY OF THESIS TO POSTGRADUATE@ABDN.AC.UK → **REGISTRY SEND THESES TO EXAMINERS WHO MUST COMPLETE A JOINT REPORT (see note 5)**

ONCE THESIS IS SUSTAINED AND ANY CORRECTIONS HAVE BEEN COMPLETED:

STUDENT SUBMITS THESIS DEPOSIT AND DECLARATION CHECKLIST FORM AND FINAL PDF COPY OF THESIS TO THE LIBRARY VIA CATALOGUING@AC.UK → **STUDENT GRADUATES**
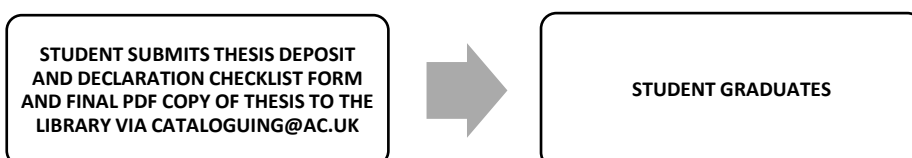
Notes

1. After the viva, students will be informed of the outcome by their Examiners. This is a **recommendation** and requires approval from a Quality Assurance Committee Officer on behalf of Senate. QAC Officers are appointed by Senate and have the authority to over-rule the decision of the Examiners, or request further information. The approval of a member of the Quality Assurance Committee is normally obtained within 2-3 weeks of receipt of reports from the Examiners, although this will be delayed when the University is closed for public holidays, i.e. over the Christmas break.

2. Following QAC approval, the Registry will issue confirmation of the outcome of the viva within 2-3 days. If there are corrections to be made to the thesis, the time for completing these will start from the date the letter is sent from the Registry.

3. If there are two External Examiners, one will be designated to certify the corrections. In this situation, students should submit corrections to the Internal Moderator, who cannot certify the corrections but who will liaise with the appropriate External.

4. The Registry will send confirmation that minor corrections have been passed as soon as possible after receipt of form certifying the corrections have been completed. This will normally be within 2-3 days of receipt of form.

5. In the case of resubmission, the same Examiners will be required to examine the thesis so the nomination process will not need to be gone through again. There is not normally a viva for a resubmission, unless the Examiners specifically request it and approval is given. Thus for a resubmission, the Examiners are required to complete a joint report, normally within two months of submission of the thesis to the Registry.

C.   Intellectual Property Rights - Assignation of Intellectual Property Rights by students

Intellectual Property rights (IPR) are the rights legally recognised to protect ownership *inter alia* of literary, artistic and scientific discoveries. In recent years there has been a growing international appreciation of the direct benefits which the proper protection of academic IPR can bring to the individual "inventor", the institution and the nation. This has led to the present policy of several governments, including the UK, giving the ownership of IPR generated by public funds to the relevant institution, provided that there are in existence the required policies and procedures to ensure full protection and encourage beneficial exploitation.

If an employee of the University makes a valuable discovery as a result of the terms of their employment, the ownership of that discovery therefore belongs to the University. Students are not employees of the University and so, unless any sponsorship agreement covering them states otherwise, they would own the intellectual property that arises from their work. However, in practice it is often difficult to distinguish between the contributions of individual students and Supervisors. To overcome these problems which can be encountered by students, the University Court has agreed that an Assignation of Intellectual Property Rights by students to the University shall be a standard condition of registration for students from September 1994, with the right to opt out to be offered to those who wish it where there are no joint ownership issues or sponsorship agreements in place. This assignation is limited to IPR arising from the student's course and studies.

The main areas of IPR which are relevant to research and scholarly work are patents and copyright. To provide full patent protection there must be registration with the Patent Office before the invention becomes public knowledge. It is therefore essential to obtain advice on the patentability of an invention and its protection <u>before</u> publishing a paper, providing drawings, giving a lecture or even discussing one's work informally at scientific meetings. The patent process can be very expensive and is often beyond the financial resources of individuals. Copyright ownership must also be legally established through the provision of acceptable evidence and again requires the obtaining of relevant advice.

In return, for assigning all his/her IPRs to the University during the period that he/she is a student, the University undertakes to do the following things:

- Assess the protection and exploitation and exploitability of any invention or discovery made or jointly made by a student speedily and at its own cost so as not to delay academic publishing unduly (although publishing may actually be delayed).
- Protect any IPRs at its own cost if those rights are judged, at the absolute discretion of the University, to have acceptable commercial potential.
- Should the University decide not to proceed with the protection and/or exploitation of any student's intellectual property and/or associated intellectual property rights will revert to the student.
- Reward the student or students concerned on the same terms as a member of staff. At present the net income (after recovery of legal and patent costs) from exploitation of any intellectual property is shared 1/3 to the inventor or inventors, 1/3 to University general funds, 1/3 to the inventor(s) discipline.

In return, the student undertakes to do the following things:

- Notify Research & Innovation (R&I), the University's technology transfer office, in writing and in the first instance through his/her Supervisor(s), and as fully as may be required, of any invention or discovery arising from his/her course or studies which in the opinion of the student or the Supervisor has the potential for commercial exploitation.

- assist the University and do all things including maintaining confidentiality and the execution of all documents at the University's cost as may be required by the University in order to secure for the University the full benefit of and beneficial legal ownership of IPRs assigned or deemed to be assigned to the University provided that the University shall be primarily responsible for securing to itself such beneficial and legal ownership.

- Notify R&I, in the first instance through his/her Supervisor, of any arrangements entered into by the student with third parties. This could include sponsors, prior to the commencement of the student's course of studies, which might reasonably be expected to affect the University's rights to any IPRs arising in the course of, or in connection with a student's studies at the University. The student shall notify the University in advance of any such arrangements as may be proposed to be entered into following the commencement of the student's course and studies, and the student shall not enter into any such arrangements without the prior consent in writing, of the University.

Further information can be obtained from: University of Aberdeen, Research & Innovation (R&I), King's College, Aberdeen, AB24 3FX. Telephone No: +44 (0) 1224 272123.

D.   Researcher Development Statement

Launched in July 2010, the Researcher Development Statement (https://www.vitae.ac.uk/vitae-publications/rdf-related) replaces the Joint Skills Statement land is endorsed as the framework for skills training.

Researcher Development Statement

The UK is committed to enhancing the higher-level capabilities of the UK workforce including the development of world-class researchers. Researchers are critical to economic success, addressing major global challenges, and building a leading knowledge economy.

The Researcher Development Statement (RDS) sets out the knowledge, behaviours and attributes of effective and highly skilled researchers appropriate for a wide range of careers.

The RDS is for policy makers and research organisations which provide personal, professional and career development for researchers in higher education.

The Researcher Development Statement is derived from the Researcher Development Framework (RDF), a major new approach to researcher development, which aims to enhance our capacity to build the UK workforce, develop world-class researchers and build our research base.

The RDS and RDF will contribute to researcher training and development in the UK by providing a strategic statement (RDS) and operational framework (RDF) to support the implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers[1], the QAA Code of practice for research degree programmes[2] and the 'Roberts'[3] recommendations for postgraduate researchers and research staff.

The RDS is structured in four domains, which encompass what researchers need to know to do research, how to be effective in their approach to research, when working with others, and in

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[1] www.researchconcordat.ac.uk
[2] www.qaa.ac.uk
[3] http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http:/www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/set_for_success.htm

contributing to the wider environment. Within each of the domains are three sub-domains and associated descriptors, which describe different aspects of being a researcher.
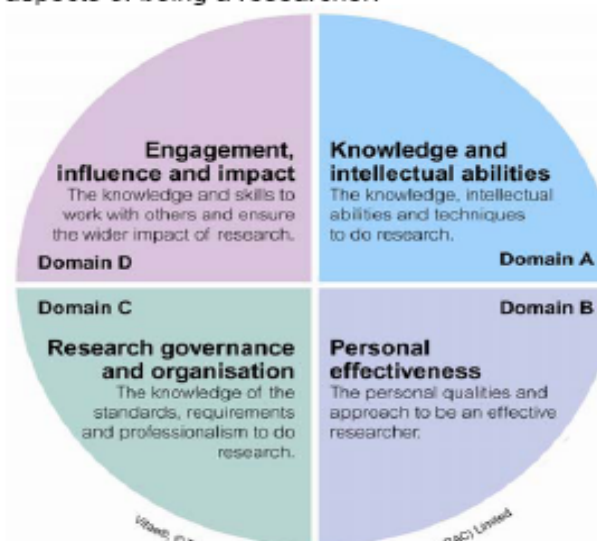
The Researcher Development Statement is an evolution of the Research Councils' Joint Skills Statement (JSS) and replaces the JSS as the key reference statement for the development of postgraduate researchers' skills and attributes and researchers employed in higher education. All the skills and attributes of the JSS have been incorporated into the RDS and their distribution is identified in the table below. A two-way mapping of the RDS and the JSS is available on the RDF section of the Vitae website.

For more information and to comment on the Researcher Development Framework and associated Statement go to www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf

www.vitae.ac.uk

Domain A: Knowledge and intellectual abilities
This domain relates to the knowledge and intellectual abilities needed to be able to carry out excellent research.

Sub-domain	Sub-domain summary	JSS

1. Knowledge base
   1. Subject knowledge
   2. Research methods – theoretical knowledge
   3. Research methods – practical application
   4. Information seeking
   5. Information literacy and management
   6. Languages
   7. Academic literacy and numeracy
	Knowledge of:
	 The area of research, the advances within it and its relationships with other research areas
	 The methods and experimental techniques appropriate for research design
	 Sources of information, bibliographic software and other information technologies
	 Literacy and numeracy skills and language abilities appropriate for research
	
	 Behaviour:
	 Makes original contributions to knowledge
	 Identifies, applies and develops methods and experimental techniques appropriate for research projects
	 Conducts effective and comprehensive information searches
	 Records, manages and handles information/data using appropriate bibliographic software and other information technologies
		A3
		 A4
		 B6
		 C2
		 C3
		 C4
		 E1

2. Cognitive abilities
   1. Analysing
   2. Synthesising
   3. Critical thinking
   4. Evaluating
   5. Problem solving
	Behaviour:
	 Analyses and evaluates findings using appropriate methods
	 Thinks originally, independently and critically; develops theoretical concepts
	 Critically synthesises information from diverse sources
	 Evaluates progress, impact and outcomes of research
	 Recognises and validates problems; formulates and applies solutions to a range of research problems
	
	 Attitude:
	 Willing to give and receive constructive criticism
		A1
		 A2
		 A5
		 A6

3. Creativity
   1. Inquiring mind
   2. Intellectual insight
   3. Innovation
   4. Argument construction
   5. Intellectual risk
	Behaviour:
	 Develops new ways of working; has novel ideas and realises their potential
	 Identifies new trends; creates new opportunities
	 Develops convincing and persuasive arguments to defend research
	 Takes intellectual risks; challenges the status quo
	
	 Attitude:
	 Takes a creative, imaginative and inquiring approach to research
	 Is open to new sources of ideas
		D1
		 D2
		 D3
		 D7*
		 E3

*Denotes where a Joint Skills Statement (JSS) descriptor has been incorporated into different descriptors within the RDF

Domain B: Personal effectiveness
This domain contains the personal qualities, career and self-management skills required to take ownership for and engage in professional development.

Sub-domain	Sub-domain summary	JSS

1. Personal qualities
   1. Enthusiasm
   2. Perseverance
   3. Integrity
   4. Self-confidence
   5. Self-reflection
   6. Responsibility
	Attitude:
	Approaches research with enthusiasm, passion and confidence
	Is resilient and perseveres in the face of obstacles
	Is self-reflective; seeks ways to improve performance and strives for research excellence
	Is pro-active, independent, self-reliant and takes responsibility for self and others
	Shows integrity
		B3
		D5
		D6
		D7*

2. Self-management
   1. Preparation and prioritisation
   2. Commitment to research
   3. Time management
   4. Responsiveness to change
   5. Work-life balance
	Behaviour:
	Anticipates and responds to directions and trends in research
	Plans, prioritises and conducts research in proactive way
	Delivers research projects and results on time and effectively
	Develops awareness of, and helps to achieve, work-life balance for self and colleagues
	
	Attitude:
	Has a strategic approach to research
	Has focus, commitment and ambition
	Is flexible and responsive to change	

3. Professional and career development
   1. Career management
   2. Continuing professional development
   3. Responsiveness to opportunities
   4. Networking
   5. Reputation and esteem
	Knowledge of:
	Career and employment opportunities inside and outside academia
	
	Behaviour:
	Takes ownership of and manages professional development
	Shows commitment to continuing professional development and enhancing employability
	Maintains and develops relevant skills set and experience in preparation for a wide range of opportunities within and outside academia
	Actively networks for professional and career purposes and seeks to enhance research reputation and esteem
		D4
		F1
		G1
		G2
		G3
		G4

*Denotes where a Joint Skills Statement (JSS) descriptor has been incorporated into different descriptors within the RDF

Domain C: Research governance and organisation
This domain relates to the knowledge of the standards, requirements and professional conduct that are needed for the effective management of research.

Sub-domain	Sub-domain summary	JSS

1. Professional conduct
   1. Health and safety
   2. Ethics and principles and sustainability
   3. Legal requirements
   4. IPR and copyright
   5. Respect and confidentiality
   6. Attribution and co-authorship
   7. Appropriate practice
	Knowledge of:
	Health and safety issues, confidentiality and ethical requirements of his/her research field
	The legal requirements and regulations relating to the area of research and the research environment
	The principles of intellectual property rights (IPR) and copyright issues, as they relate to research, its commercialisation and dissemination
	Organisational and professional requirements and environmental impact of research
	The concept of corporate social responsibility
	
	Behaviour:
	Respects, acknowledges and attributes the contribution of others
	Seeks to protect, where appropriate, the intellectual assets arising from research and to maximise the wider value of research findings
	Acts with professional integrity in all aspects of research governance
	Uses institutional/organisational resources responsibly and appropriately
	Seeks ways of working in a sustainable manner
	
	Attitude:
	Respects, upholds and meets professional standards and requirements
		B2
		B4

2. Research management
   1. Research strategy
   2. Project planning and delivery
   3. Risk management
	Knowledge of:
	The contribution of research to the health of disciplines and institutional missions
	Project management tools and techniques
	
	Behaviour:
	Applies appropriate project management tools and techniques
	Sets goals and plans and manages resources to deliver results
	Effectively assesses and manages risks
	Evaluates the effectiveness of research projects
		C1

3. Finance, funding and resources
   1. Income and funding generation
   2. Financial management
   3. Infrastructure and resources
	Knowledge of:
	The requirement for research income generation and financial management
	Mechanisms for funding, the range of funding sources and the processes for making applications
	Local administrative systems, reporting procedures and infrastructure processes
	
	Behaviour:
	Responsibly manages finances, resources and infrastructures related to research
		B5

Domain D: Engagement, influence and impact
This domain relates to the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to engage with, influence and impact on the academic, social, cultural, economic and broader context.

Sub-domain	Sub-domain summary	JSS

1.   Working with others
  1. Collegiality
  2. Team working
  3. People management
  4. Supervision
  5. Mentoring
  6. Influence and leadership
  7. Collaboration
  8. Equality and diversity
	Behaviour:
	Actively works in an inclusive, respectful and constructive way with colleagues, stakeholders and research users
	Recognises and acknowledges the contribution of others and own part in team success
	Builds relationships in academic and commercial contexts; approachable and interacts constructively with others; manages expectations and resolves conflict
	Supervises, mentors and develops the potential of less experienced researchers and colleagues through support and advice
	Leads, motivates and influences where appropriate; persuades through listening and convincing discussion
	Builds and sustains collaborative relationships and works pro-actively to create and develop knowledge with a range of stakeholders, including researchers, funders and users of research
	
	Attitude:
	Respects the inclusive and collegial manner in which researchers conduct relationships within and beyond academia
	Recognises the potential for working in sustained partnerships with a range of stakeholders to generate new ideas, insights and maximise the potential for wider societal and economic impact
	Respects individual difference and diversity
		E5
		F2
		F3

2.   Communication and dissemination
  1. Communication methods
  2. Communication media
  3. Publication
	Knowledge of:
	Appropriate communication and dissemination mechanisms for different audiences
	The importance of engaging in the processes of publication and dissemination of research results and impacts
	
	Behaviour:
	Communicates effectively in both written and oral modes with a range of audiences formally and informally through a variety of different techniques and media
	Actively engages in publication and dissemination of research results and impacts
		E2

3.   Engagement and impact
  1. Teaching
  2. Public engagement
  3. Enterprise
  4. Policy
  5. Society and culture
  6. Global citizenship
	Knowledge of:
	Global, organisational, cultural, economic, and environmental contexts, and the wider impact of research
	The social and ethical implications of research, and public attitudes to these issues
	The range of mechanisms to support knowledge transfer and maximise the impact of research in academic, economic and societal contexts
	
	Behaviour:
	Engages with and shares research through research-informed and student-focused teaching
	Contributes to increasing public awareness, engagement and understanding of research and associated impacts
	Identifies innovative trends, ideas and applications; is enterprising and entrepreneurial within and beyond academia
	Works collaboratively with all stakeholders to create, develop and exchange research knowledge to influence and benefit policy development, society and the economy; seeks new outlets and promotes the application of research in innovative ways
	Appreciates and works with diversity and difference in research and education
	
	Attitude:
	Values the contribution of research to teaching and teaching to research
	Recognises the importance of accountability of research with regard to social and economic impacts, internationalisation and global citizenship
		B1
		B7
		E4

E.   Data Protection and Freedom of Information

E.1   Data Protection

The University requires a certain amount of personal information for the administration of students' studies and to ensure the proper completion of their chosen courses or degree programme. All personal information provided by students will be treated strictly in terms of the Data Protection Act 1998: their confidentiality will be respected and all appropriate measures will be taken to prevent unauthorised disclosure. The data students provide will be used for stated purposes only and they would be advised about any further uses.

The University does all it can to ensure that all data remains up-to-date and accurate, but there are some areas in which we must emphasise our reliance on students to inform us of changes which occur between updates.   It is therefore extremely important that students keep us informed of any such changes, to avoid situations where (for example) we might send vital mail to the wrong address. Students have access to the personal information held about them on the Student Record system via their Student Portal. **Students must use their Portal to check the information held on them and change anything that is incorrect or is missing.**

Students who require to process personal data as part of their studies must also ensure that they abide by the Data Protection Act.   Further information on the Act can be accessed at www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/governance/data-protection-255:

Information regarding Freedom of Information and the University's Publication scheme can be found at: www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/governance/freedom-of-information-254

E.2   HESA Student Collection Notice

We will send some of the information we hold about you to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). This forms your HESA record, which contains details of your ethnic group and any disabilities you have. HESA will pass your record, or parts of it, to any of the following organisations that need it to carry out their statutory functions connected with higher education:

- Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS)
- Welsh Assembly Government (WAG)
- Scottish Executive (SE) [Scottish Government (SG)]
- Department for Employment and Learning, Northern Ireland (DEL(NI))
- Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)
- Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW)
- Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council (SFC)
- Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA)
- Research Councils (RCs)
- Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)

HESA and the organisations listed above will use the information mainly to produce statistics. This may result in information being published and released to other approved users, including academic researchers and commercial organisations. Your record will not be used in a way that could affect you personally and the organisations will take precautions to reduce the risk of you being identified from the information once it is published and released.

While you are a student, we will need to keep your contact details. These do not form part of your HESA record, so HESA and the organisations listed above cannot use this record to contact you.

Your contact details may be passed to survey contractors to carry out the National Student Survey and surveys of student finances, on behalf of the education organisations listed above. These organisations and their contractors will use your details only for that purpose, and will then delete them.

About six months after you graduate, we will contact you to ask you to fill in the HESA 'Destinations of Leavers from HE' survey. We will not give your contact details to HESA. You might be included in a sample of leavers who are surveyed

again a few years after they graduate. If so, we will pass your contact details to the organisation that has been contracted to carry out that survey. That organisation will use your details only for that purpose, and will then delete them. (If you do not want to take part in this second survey, please let us know.)

Under the Data Protection Act 1998, you have the right to a copy of the information HESA holds about you. You will have to pay a small fee for this. If you have any concerns about your information being used for these purposes, please contact HESA.

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21/10/22