

## **14 POSTGRADUATE REGULATIONS**

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### **14B POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH DEGREE REGULATIONS**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

- 14b.1 The university has adopted the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) as the basis for the development and design of its postgraduate research degree programmes, which relate explicitly to SCQF Levels 11 and 12. These regulations apply to postgraduate research qualifications of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Professional Doctorates (EdD, EngD), Master of Philosophy (MPhil), Master of Letters (MLitt), Master of Research (MRes) and Master of Science by Research (MSc), awards validated under the agreement with the University of Aberdeen (UoA).
- 14b.2 The current Postgraduate Research (PGR) regulations closely follow those of the University of Aberdeen (UoA), with which the university has an Accreditation Agreement for Research Degree Programmes. Full details of the regulations and procedures are included in their Academic and Quality Handbook at [www.abdn.ac.uk/registry/quality/section8.pdf](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/registry/quality/section8.pdf).
- 14b.3 Under its agreement with UoA, the university may offer research degree programmes up to, and including, SCQF Level 12. The university may also collaborate with other appropriate institutions to offer joint research programmes on approval from UoA, in accordance with the general provisions of the university's regulations.
- 14b.4 These regulations should be read in conjunction with the PGR Code of Practice for Students and Supervisors, which is aligned with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. The PGR Code of Practice provides detailed guidance and practical support in relation to the responsibilities of research students, supervisors and academic partners.

#### **RESEARCH DEGREES**

- 14b.5 The generic learning outcomes that will apply to postgraduate research degree programmes offered relate to those set out in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).
- 14b.6 Research degrees offered by each academic area are dependent upon the successful validation of degrees in that area, as described in the Accreditation Agreement with UoA.
- 14b.7 Postgraduate research students may be accepted in academic areas outwith currently validated areas. These areas are subject to quality assurance and management from UoA, as described in the Accreditation Agreement.

#### **PROGRAMME DURATION**

- 14b.8 The normal periods of study for research degrees are as follows:

	<b>Minimum period of study</b>	
<b>Degree</b>	<b>Full-time</b>	<b>Part-time</b>
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) Professional Doctorate (EngD, EdD)	36 months	60 months
Master of Philosophy (MPhil)	24 months	42 months
Master of Letters (MLitt)	12 months	24 months
Master of Research (MRes)	12 months	24 months
Master of Science by Research (MSc)	12 months	24 months

14b.9 The Research Degrees Committee (RDC) shall have power to recognise study undertaken elsewhere as counting towards this period, provided that in no case shall the period of registration for any degree be less than 12 months (full-time) or 24 months (part-time).

14b.10 Exceptional minimum periods of study outwith those stipulated above may be permitted for students registered on a PhD, EngD, EdD or MPhil by RDC on application by students, provided that:

- (i) no application to reduce the period of study is submitted until a thesis is submitted for examination
- (ii) for full-time students the period shall not be reduced to less than 24 months (PhD, EngD, EdD) or 12 months (MPhil)
- (iii) for part-time students the period shall not be reduced to less than 36 months (PhD, EngD, EdD) or 24 months (MPhil).

14b.11 RDC may, on the application of the student, extend the normal period of study in exceptional circumstances. No extension will be approved beyond the following:

	<b>Maximum period of study</b>	
<b>Degree</b>	<b>Full-time</b>	<b>Part-time</b>
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) Professional Doctorate (EdD, EngD)	60 months	84 months
Master of Philosophy (MPhil)	48 months	66 months
Master of Letters (MLitt)	36 months	48 months
Master of Research (MRes)	36 months	48 months
Master of Science by Research (MSc)	36 months	48 months

14b.12 Students funded by one of the UK Research Councils, or any other external funding body are responsible for complying with the requirement of their funding body in regards to length of period of study and deadline for submission of thesis.

## ADMISSION

14b.13 The standard benchmark for being admitted to a research degree will normally be:

- (i) a Masters degree at postgraduate level of a university in the United Kingdom or equivalent, or

- (ii) a first or upper second class Honours degree of a university in the United Kingdom or equivalent, or
- (iii) other qualifications or experience that, in the opinion of RDC, on the recommendation of the principal of the academic partner concerned, affords sufficient evidence of their availability to benefit and work at the academic level associated with.

- 14b.14 It is the duty of RDC, if it decides that an application be accepted:
- (i) to approve the subject of research to be pursued by the candidate
  - (ii) to approve, and in relevant cases to specify the period of research, including study, required in each case
  - (iii) to appoint persons to supervise the candidate
  - (iv) to confirm the student has evidenced relevant funds to finance study.
- 14b.15 Students may undertake research on a full-time or part-time basis as long as RDC is satisfied that a student will have sufficient opportunities for research and that adequate supervision can be provided.
- 14b.16 On application, RDC may permit students admitted as full-time students to complete requirements as part-time students for a specified period, or persons admitted as part-time students to complete requirements as full-time students for a specified period.
- 14b.17 Research shall, for full-time students, be conducted at the university, an affiliated institution or with an institution that has appropriate facilities to host research students.
- 14b.18 RDC may permit or require students to study elsewhere if it is satisfied that such study is desirable for the prosecution of their research and that adequate supervision can be provided. Every full-time student should, however, normally study at the university:
- (i) for not less than six months in the case of students for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy or Master of Philosophy
  - (ii) for not less than 3 months in the case of students for other degrees.
- 14b.19 Students whose first language is not English must satisfy both UK Visa and Immigration (UKVI) regulations for entry to the UK as an overseas student as well as the English Language proficiency requirements as outlined in the admissions and enrolment regulations.
- 14b.20 International research students under Tier 4 visas are obliged to attend monthly attendance checks with their supervisor(s). Where a sponsored student fails to meet the programme requirements in terms of attendance or a request to withdraw is received this must be reported by the university in accordance with the monitoring requirements set out by UKVI.
- 14b.21 Students may be admitted to a collaborative programme with an institution external to the university and UoA. An agreement approved by UoA and signed by the university and the collaborative institution must be in place prior to the student commencing study.
- 14b.22 Where a supervisor joins the staff of the university or an academic partner, RDC shall have the power to admit PhD students of that member of staff on the agreement of UoA.

## STUDENT SUPPORT AND CONDUCT

- 14b.23 All students and supervisors are required to conduct their work and supervision in accordance with the guidance contained within the PGR Code of Practice for Students and Supervisors.
- 14b.24 Every student admitted shall undertake a programme of supervised research and training for a period to be specified in accordance with regulation 14b.8 above, under the supervision of persons appointed for the purpose.
- 14b.25 In retaining tuition fees the academic partner commits to the provision of necessary resources and services in support of the student. If appropriate this may also include purchase of equipment or software (specialist seating, dyslexia software etc).
- 14b.26 Graduate School shall provide centralised guidance and support to all research students and supervisors throughout registration periods and up until graduation.
- 14b.27 Academic partners are expected to provide guidance and support for postgraduate research students, principally through the growth and development of a close academic working relationship.
- 14b.28 Under the Accreditation Agreement with University of Aberdeen, research students have Associate Student status with UoA. University students shall have use of the UoA library (including access to online journals), computing services, hospitality services, sport and recreation facilities, UoA research development events and other student facilities and services.
- 14b.29 All 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 skill requirements.
- 14b.30 A student may be required to attend one or more credit-bearing courses of study for a specified period as requested or approved by RDC. Students who successfully complete the relevant programme of courses shall be entitled to the award of Postgraduate Certificate or Postgraduate Diploma in Research Methods, appropriately designated (60 or 120 credit points at Level 11 respectively which can include courses taken elsewhere as part of a collaborative programme). This Certificate or Diploma shall be additional to any award made to the student on completion of the degree programme.
- 14b.31 Students for the Degree of Doctor of Engineering (EngD) shall normally be required to attend an approved programme of taught courses totalling 180 credit points at Level 11 before being permitted to embark on their research project for the degree. Students already in possession of the degree Master of Science in an appropriate discipline may be admitted directly to the project stage of the programme.
- 14b.32 Students for the Degree of Doctor of Education (EdD) are required to complete a set of prescribed courses at doctoral level before being permitted to continue on the programme.

Students who do not progress beyond this may be eligible for the degree of Master of Research (Research for Professional Educators) provided they have accumulated at least 180 credit points at Level 11.

## **SUPERVISION AND PROGRESSION**

- 14b.33 In order to progress through a degree all students are required to undergo regular progress monitoring reviews. These take place in line with the Postgraduate Structured Management Framework (PSMF) schedule relevant to the award registered on.
- 14b.34 MRes and MLitt candidates, with the support of their supervisors, who wish to proceed instead to the award of Doctor of Philosophy, must apply for permission through RDC and have approval from UoA.
- 14b.35 Of the persons appointed to supervise the student's research, the Director of Studies shall be a Professor, Reader, Lecturer or other suitably qualified individual currently employed by the university. If the student's research is conducted at another institution, at least one supervisor will be a member of staff at that institution.

## **ASSESSMENT**

- 14b.36 The research student examination process in the university is governed by UoA regulations and UoA ultimately retains responsibility for the quality and standards of awards made under the accreditation agreement.
- 14b.37 All students shall present a thesis embodying the results of their research, which must be accompanied by a signed declaration confirming that the work has been composed by themselves, that any personal data has been processed in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 and that all quotations have been distinguished by quotation marks and the sources of information specifically acknowledged. If any results were obtained partly in association with other workers, assistants or students, the nature or extent of this help, if substantial, must be specifically acknowledged in the declaration.
- 14b.38 RDC approves the appointment of examiners for higher degrees examined by thesis and oral examination.
- 14b.39 If a student is a full or part time member of academic staff in the university, at least two external examiners must be appointed in addition to an internal moderator for examination. In all other cases one internal examiner and one external examiner is nominated. Where the internal examiner is a member of UoA staff an additional moderator should be appointed to carry out the duties normally expected of the internal examiner with the exception of actual examination of the thesis.
- 14b.40 It is the responsibility of the internal examiner (or internal moderator) to make the arrangements for the oral examination. Oral examinations normally take place at the university but may be held elsewhere by the mutual agreement of all the examiners and the student.

- 14b.41 The oral examination should normally take place within two months of the date of dispatch of the student's thesis to the examiners.
- 14b.42 On receipt of the final corrected thesis UoA will confirm to the student that they have completed the requirements for the award of the degree.
- 14b.43 Unless an approved embargo is stipulated an electronic copy of the student's thesis will be stored within the university's research database.
- 14b.44 Academic appeals will only be considered on matters of procedure, competency and/or prejudice. If a student seeks to appeal against a decision involving academic judgement they should follow the assessment appeals procedure regulations.

#### **ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT**

- 14b.45 The standard regulations governing academic misconduct are set out within the academic misconduct policy and procedure. Definition of the types of academic misconduct and the processes followed can be found in the PGR Code of Practice.
- 14b.46 The university actively pursues all cases of suspected misconduct to safeguard the integrity of its awards as well as the interests of the majority of students who work hard for their award through their own efforts. Decisions on the severity and extent of misconduct are matters of academic judgement with any penalties agreed by the Academic Misconduct Panel.
- 14b.47 Where an allegation of non-academic misconduct is made it shall be up to the individual academic partner to investigate the matter and decide on appropriate action or penalty in accordance with on-site regulations and processes as well as the PGR Code of Practice for Students and Supervisors.
- 14b.48 If an allegation of research misconduct in respect of a thesis submitted for a research degree is admitted or if an Investigating Officer of the Disciplinary Committee, decides that such an allegation has been proven, the student may be liable to a penalty or expulsion from the degree, in line with UoA regulations.

#### **INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS**

- 14b.49 The owner of the intellectual property developed and/or generated by a postgraduate student will be the employer of the student's lead supervisor or as otherwise agreed with the funder.

#### **WITHDRAWAL AND TERMINATION**

- 14b.50 The standard regulations for withdrawal are set out within the admissions and enrolment regulations.

- 14b.51 RDC in conjunction with UoA have the power to terminate at any time a person's candidature, provided it is satisfied that there is sufficient reason for doing so following due process of review and appeal.
- 14b.52 Research students whose studies or candidature for a degree or other qualification have been recommended for termination or are being considered for termination under the regulations governing the qualification for which they are registered, have the right to submit representations against such termination to Academic Council and UoA.