

**CODE OF PRACTICE FOR RESEARCH DEGREE PROGRAMMES**

**2020/2021**

**Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes**

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**ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

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| **Provost** | The Provost is responsible for the delivery or teaching and research across the University. |
| **Associate Dean for Research and Enterprise/Institute Research/Faculty Executive Dean/Institute Directors** | This group has responsibility to ensure that the physical (e.g. equipment and space) and human resources (e.g. the suitability, availability and performance of the supervisory team) required for supervision are available within the Faculty/Institute. |
| **Doctoral Programme Leads** | Each Faculty/Institute has a designated member or members of staff responsible for coordinating the research student programme and for monitoring student progress. This person is the key contact for all issues relating to research students within the Faculty/Institute. |
| **Directors of Studies**  **Head of Research Services** | The Directors of Studies are responsible for supporting their doctoral students to progress satisfactorily and in accordance with the University’s Regulations and Quality Assurance expectations.  The University’s Head of Research Services is responsible for ensuring that the management of the research degree programmes is carried out in accordance with this Code of Practice. |
| **Registry**  **Research Degrees Committee** | The Registry is responsible for maintaining the research students’ records and ensuring that the students register and enrol each academic year.  The Research Degrees Committee is responsible for overseeing the admission, assessment and progression of postgraduate research students and for the appointment of examiners. The RDC is Chaired by the Provost and reports to the University Research Committee. |
| **University Research Committee** | The University Research Committee is responsible for overseeing research strategy and activities across the University. |
| **Faculty/Institute**  **Research Committees** | The Faculty/Institute Research Committees are responsible to the Research Degrees Committee for the quality and academic standards of doctoral study within the Faculty/Institute. |
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# 1 SCOPE, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE CODE

1. This Code sets out St Mary’s policy and procedural framework relating to doctoral study provision undertaken at St Mary’s University. The Code should be read in conjunction with the *Regulations for Research Degrees -* [*http://simmspace.stmarys.ac.uk/prog-admin/research-students/Pages/Regulations.aspx*](http://simmspace.stmarys.ac.uk/prog-admin/research-students/Pages/Regulations.aspx)
2. It applies to:

Degrees solely based on research (PhD, MPhil);

The research elements of the Professional Doctorates;

PhD by published works.

1. The aims of this Code are:

* to ensure that research students at St Mary’s are effectively supervised so that the full potential of their research ability may be achieved and their research completed within an appropriate period
* to ensure that students and staff have a common understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities
* to promote policies and procedures which protect the academic standards of the University.

1. The objective of this Code is to define a set of standard procedures and specific responsibilities covering the academic supervision, administration, and assessment of research degrees within St Mary’s University.
2. This Code has been informed by a number of external advisory bodies, and is designed to be consistent with Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education Quality Code for Higher Education Chapter B11 (2011).

# 2 THE NATURE AND DURATION OF A RESEARCH DEGREE PROGRAMME

2.1In selecting a research project, the scope of the project should be such that it should be achievable by a capable, suitably qualified and diligent student, who is properly supported and supervised, within 30/48 months of full-time study (48/84 for part-time study) for a PhD, or within a timeframe set by any sponsor (e.g. Research Council). The minimum and maximum periods of study for both full- and part-time students are prescribed by the Regulations

2.2 **MPhil**

2.2.1 An MPhil thesis should be an original piece of work of around 60,000 words or equivalent on a subject approved by the University. It is normally completed in 36 months of full-time study or 60 months part-time.

2.2.2 An MPhil must pose a clear question, devise an appropriate methodology and reach a significant conclusion. In it the student will have to demonstrate that they know how to conduct research at an advanced level in their chosen field, construct a complex argument and marshal a substantial body of evidence to support it. They will have to show that they are aware of what is going on at the forefront of their discipline - the most important advances, insights, theories and methodologies - and are able to evaluate and critique it. The thesis should embody the results of a well-designed research programme or consist of an ordered and critical exposition of existing knowledge in a well-defined field.

2.2.3 A student, on successful completion of the MPhil should have learned how to:

* deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate the conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences
* exercise self-discipline and self-direction, demonstrate originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional level
* continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level.

2.3 **PhD**

2.3.1 A PhD thesis should be an original piece of work normally in the region of 80,000 words and no more than 100,000 words or equivalent on a subject approved by the Research Degrees Committee. Students should consult their Director of Studies for guidance on appropriate wordage for their chosen discipline. It is completed between 30 and 48 months of full-time study or 48 and 84 months of part-time study.

2.3.2 The PhD thesis should have all the qualities of an MPhil, and more. Where it differs, is that it should be a major contribution to knowledge. It is also normally about twice the length which means that the student has to compose on a larger scale, present and interpret greater quantities of data, or marshal more complex arguments. The PhD demands higher levels of originality and scholarship than the MPhil. It has to stand at the forefront of its discipline, to break new ground and to demonstrate a comprehensive and critical understanding of the latest advances in its field.

2.3.3 To write a successful PhD the student will have to be able to conceptualise, design and implement a major project which will result in the generation of significant new knowledge and/or understanding of their chosen subject.

2.3.4 A student on successful completion of the PhD should have learned how to:

* make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences
* analyse complex problems, and conceive, design and implement methodologies which will solve them
* continue to undertake research at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas, or approaches
* disseminate their work to a broad audience.

**2.4 PhD by Published Work**

2.4.1 See Annex 2 of the Research Degree Regulations.

**2.5 PhD in Creative and/or Performance based subjects**

2.5.1 Where original practical work is submitted in part fulfilment of the MPhil or PhD degree, it should take the form of an exhibition or other relevant visual presentation of practical outcomes as befits the professional standards of the discipline. Such work should confirm to the guidance as set out in paragraphs 2.2 to 2.3 above**.** In addition, the work submitted for examination (practical work and written text taken together), should critically reflect on the research process and clearly set out:

* the research issues, problems or questions that have been addressed
* the context in which those issues, problems or questions are located; and
* what research methods have been used to address these issues, problems or questions.

**3 GENERAL ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS FOR RESEARCH STUDENTS**

**3.1 Research Degrees Committee**

3.1.1 The Research Degrees Committee (RDC) will exercise overall responsibility for the welfare and academic progress of the research students in the University. In particular, the RDC is responsible for ensuring that the requirements set out in this Code are followed and that the procedures for the selection of supervisors and monitoring of progress of students are strictly observed.

3.1.2 Within this overall remit detailed responsibilities of the RDC are:

(i) approval of applications to the research degree programmes

(ii) to consider and approve the nominations of new Director of Studies, Research Supervisors and Research Advisers

(iii) to consider and approve the nominations for all internal and external examiners

(iv) to monitor the annual progress reviews, research training and supervision

(v) to monitor and approve confirmation of registration reviews and upgrades from MPhil to PhD

1. to recommend doctoral, level 8 awards to Academic Board
2. to ensure compliance with relevant University policies on equal opportunities and additional support needs
3. to ensure compliance with the Research Degree Regulations, Academic

Regulations and the Code of Practice

(viii) to make recommendations to the University Research Committee on policy and procedures in respect of doctoral students.

**3.2 Student Representation on Committees**

3.2.1 The interests of research students are represented on the University Research Committee. Discussions of individual student or supervisor performance are confidential and are dealt with under reserved business when student representatives are not present.

3.2.2 The interests of research students at individual Faculty/Institute level are represented through membership on the Faculty/Institute Research Committee or equivalent.

**3.3 Annual Review of the Doctoral Degree Programme**

3.3.1 The Head of Research Services conducts a review on an annual basis, evaluating student progress and awards and addresses quality assurance, resources, staff development or other issues emerging through the student monitoring process. The review also addresses any feedback from students, external funding bodies and employers, where applicable. The review takes account of:

* research student registrations
* academic progression
* research degree completions and awards
* skills training
* general issues, if any, arising from reports from external examiners
* issues raised by students with supervisors, through the University Research Committee or in student annual progress reviews
* any issues arising which have resource implications for the support of research students.

**3.4 Promotional Information**

3.4.1 All publicity materials associated with research degree programmes (including web pages) should be clear, accurate and of sufficient detail to enable prospective students to make informed choices.

**4 SELECTION AND ADMISSION OF RESEARCH STUDENTS**

4.1 Applicants will be expected to hold appropriate academic qualifications and/or experience. The general entrance requirements are defined in the Regulations for Research Degrees. The normal requirement for registration on a research degree programme is a Master’s degree which matches the descriptor for a Level 7 qualification in the UK Framework of Higher Education Qualifications, or other qualification deemed by the University to be equivalent. If an applicant does not fulfil the normal entry requirements, they may be considered for admission, provided that the applicant holds professional or other qualifications deemed appropriate.

**4.2 Pre-Registration**

4.2.1 Prospective applicants may be required to pre-register with the University. The pre-registration period is designed to enable candidates to develop their research proposals with the assistance of the proposed Director of Studies and the use of University resources. All applicants should be interviewed by the prospective Director of Studies and two members of academic staff from the Faculty/Institute to which they are applying and applications need to be noted by the Faculty/Institute research committee. The pre-registration period will last for a maximum of twelve months.

**4.3 Selection Process**

4.3.1 If pre-registration is not required, an application for full registration is made to the University. The information required is as follows:

* Completed online application form
* The title of the proposed project
* The research proposal which should specify the nature of the research question which the study aims to examine, a discussion of the relevant literature, a discussion of the possible methodologies to be used in order to illustrate the nature of the research and an indicative bibliography
* Transcripts of previous qualifications
* Ethical implications, resources required and costs likely to be incurred
* Two references for the student (referees should be asked to comment on the suitability for a student for MPhil/PhD study and confirm that the student is suitably qualified in the proposed field of study).

4.3.2 Applicants will be interviewed by three academic staff (one of whom should be the proposed Director of Studies or main supervisor), who have received advice and guidance in respect of selections and admissions procedures. The interview may be undertaken in person, by telephone or by Skype/Zoom/MS Teams, or equivalent. Two references should be taken up before an offer is made.

4.3.3 Applicants will be required to satisfy the interview panel of their ability to understand and communicate in both written and spoken English that is adequate for the purposes of pursuing the programme. The minimum level for entry for a PhD programme is IELTS 6.5. Written evidence of the satisfactory completion of an IELTS test will be submitted as part of the application process, if required.

**4.4 Accepting an Applicant**

4.4.1 Before recommending the acceptance of an applicant, the Faculty/Institute must be satisfied with the following –

* costs of the planned research and/or financial support can be covered
* the programme has complied with the University’s criteria for assessing the applicant’s qualification and preparedness for a research degree
* the programme is within the applicant’s capabilities
* the applicant is able to demonstrate an adequate knowledge of the English language if his/her first language is not English (see paragraph 4.3.3 above)
* the applicant is capable of sustaining research at this level and completing within the required length of the programme
* the applicant can be supported by suitable supervisors and adequate facilities within an appropriate research environment.

4.4.2 Applications will be recommended for acceptance by the Faculty/Institute to the Research Degrees Committee. A formal offer letter will be sent by Admissions to successful applicants. The offer letter will set out the terms and conditions on which the offer is made.

4.4.3 Research student applications will be subject to the University’s procedures on declared criminal convictions.

**4.5 Exemption from part of the programme of study**

4.5.1 An applicant who has undertaken, but not completed a programme of postgraduate research at another university or at St Mary’s University but has subsequently withdrawn from studies, may be considered for exemption from part of a programme of study at the University.

4.5.2 In order to qualify for consideration, the applicant’s previous research must:

* Correspond, in terms of the level and area of work, to the proposed project of research at the University;
* Have been undertaken at a university, or a similar institution of appropriate standing and be certified by a competent officer at that institution;
* Have been undertaken over a period of at least 12 months of full-time study, or 24 months of part-time study no more than seven years before the proposed date of initial registration at the University;
* Not have been counted already towards the award of a Research Degree at any institution.

4.5.3 Applicants to Professional Doctorates may under exceptional circumstances request exemption, on the basis of prior certificated learning, from one or more of the Part One courses. Such students will be expected to complete the programme in less time than those admitted to study the full programme. The reduced duration will be calculated on the basis of the number of credits from which the student has been exempted, and shall be communicated to the student as part of the formal notification of the outcome of the request for exemption.

4.5.4 Applications for exemption are considered by the Research Degrees Committee before the applicant first registers on the programme of study. If the application is approved, the Committee will clarify whether any conditions apply.

4.5.5 In all cases a student must complete at least 12 months of full-time study or 18 months of part-time study at the University before submitting work for the final examination, subject also to the requirements of final submission.

**5 STUDENT INFORMATION AND INDUCTION**

5.1 Information

5.1.1 Each Faculty/Institute may provide research students with specific information and guidance which they may need during their attendance at the University, supplementary to the *Code of Practice*. The information should provide details of Faculty/Institute procedures, health and safety if appropriate, and will also inform the student what he or she can expect from the Faculty/Institute.

5.1.2 The information will include the following:

* the specialist and general equipment and work space available to students within the Faculty/Institute in support of their research project and any Faculty/Institute policy regarding limits placed on the use of these facilities. This would typically include any arrangements for access to computer hardware, photocopiers, telephones, inter-Library loans

1. details of required or optional training programmes available
2. details of how to apply for funding for doctoral student funding to support attendance at conferences, etc.
3. relevant health and safety and other legislative information
4. the name and responsibilities of the Faculty Dean/Institute Director, Associate Dean for Research & Enterprise and the Doctoral Programme Lead and the internal structure of the Faculty/Institute.

5.2 Induction

5.2.1 Students receive an appropriate induction to both the Faculty/Institute in which they are to pursue their research and the University. They should be acquainted with University facilities (including those of the Students’ Union) and student support services and given sufficient information to allow them to start their work, including details of any administrative requirements.

5.2.2 Students are provided with online information including access to the PGR *Code of Practice,* during their induction.

5.2.3 Students must receive appropriate health and safety training if relevant to their field of work.

5.2.4 Students should be given the opportunity to meet a range of Faculty/Institute staff and a range of other research students.

**6 DEVELOPMENT OF RESEARCH STUDENTS**

6.1.1 Research students will be helped to gain the knowledge and skills they need to complete their programmes effectively and to help prepare themselves for their subsequent career. This is normally part of the supervisory process, but should also include elements of formal training provided by the University such as [St Mary’s Researcher Development Programme](http://simmspace.stmarys.ac.uk/prog-admin/research-students/Pages/Researcher-Development.aspx), or another institution. It is the responsibility of the Director of Studies and Research Services to ensure appropriate training is made available to research students. The Research Degrees Committee (RDC) should keep under review the training and support provided to doctoral students and should review this as part of the annual programme review process.

6.1.2 All research students will have access to skills training. In line with the Researcher Development Framework - <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/researchers/428241/Vitae-Researcher-Development-Framework.html>, the University monitors progress and identifies training needs. Students are supported in each of the areas of:

1. learning, research and scholarship
2. employability and engagement with society; and
3. personal communication skills

in pursuance of the *QAA’s Quality Code for Higher Education Chapter B11: Research degrees, 2012.*

6.1.3 Students will also have access to support and academic writing skills courses, necessary for their research.

6.1.4 Students will be required to undertake research training relevant to their project where they have not already undertaken this as part of a master’s programme.

6.1.5 All research students are required to undertake a skills audit early on in their first year on the programme to ascertain their training needs. This audit will be reviewed and updated as part of the annual monitoring review process.

6.1.6 Faculty/Institutes will conduct regular research seminars to provide appropriate opportunities for research students to formally present their work to peers and senior colleagues and students should be required to attend, where possible.

6.1.7 Students are required, in conjunction with their Director of Studies, to maintain a record of personal progress which includes reference to the development of research and other skills.

6.1.8 Students will be informed, in writing, if any taught element is compulsory and, if so, whether they are to be academically assessed and the consequences of unsatisfactory progress.

**6.2 Ethical considerations for projects using human participants**

6.2.1 All research projects must conform to ‘*The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Covenants on Human Rights’* (UN General Assembly, December 2004) and with the University’s Ethics Guidelines and Research Integrity Policies. Researchers are also required to observe the ethical guidelines advocated by their own professional or statutory body.

6.2.2 Any research involving human participants must be subject to ethical consideration and approval*.* It is the responsibility of the Director of Studies to ensure that students are aware of the *Ethical* *Guidelines* and that the *Ethical Guidelines* are observed - <http://simmspace.stmarys.ac.uk/prog-admin/ethics-integrity/Pages/Ethics-and-Integrity.aspx>

**6.3 Research Data Management**

6.3.1 The University has a Research Data Management (RDM) policy to ensure that information generated as a result of research is effectively managed to avoid loss or security breaches. It also aims to promote open access to this information where appropriate. Research students are expected to adhere to the principles of the University’s RDM policy - <http://simmspace.stmarys.ac.uk/services-students/library-it-services/Pages/research-data-management.aspx>.

##### 6.4 Data Protection Act

6.4.1 All research projects are subject to the Data Protection Act 1998 and the handling, storage or processing of all personal data must be conducted in accordance with the University’s registration under the Act. Doctoral students are themselves responsible for ensuring that their research complies with the University’s Data Protection Policy and guidelines.

**6.5 Intellectual Property**

6.5.1 While the copyright of the thesis belongs to the author, a student is required to assign to the University any intellectual property rights (whether patentable or otherwise) that the student is considered to have acquired whilst studying at the University in return for a fair proportion of any net receipts in accordance with the terms of the University’s Financial Regulations

A student may, however, be subject to a specific agreement with the student’s sponsor concerning the assignment of intellectual property rights to the sponsor.

**6.6 Insurances**

6.6.1 The University’s Legal Services team should be advised about any projects which might involve significant risk for insurance purposes

**6.7 Teaching Activities**

6.7.1 In cases where students are asked to assist with teaching activities, their responsibilities must be clearly defined in writing and be compatible with their research responsibilities. They should be fairly remunerated for this work. It is recognised that such activities are to the advantage of the student, both financially and in terms of career development. In determining the appropriate volume of such work the Director of Studies and Doctoral Programme Lead shall have regard to the student’s overall workload.

6.7.2 Where teaching and/or demonstrating duties are associated with their funding arrangements, students must be notified in writing and the University should provide full details of the terms and conditions of these arrangements.

6.7.3 Teaching work should be shared out amongst doctoral students as fairly as possible. Students who do not wish to teach and have no contractual obligation to do so should not be required to do so.

6.7.4 The Faculty Dean/Institute Director and Doctoral Programme Lead should be satisfied of the student’s suitability before teaching and will be responsible for formally approving all teaching activities allocated to research students within the Faculty/Institute.

6.7.5 A record should be kept by the Faculty/Institute of any teaching activities (including demonstrating, assisting with tutorials and marking) undertaken by students whilst pursuing their doctoral programme.

6.7.6 Students involved in teaching are required to attend training on the skills involved in good teaching (including marking) provided by the University’s Centre for Teaching Excellence and Student Success. Students undertaking teaching should be assigned to a member of staff involved in the programme or module being taught who will co-ordinate their teaching activities and brief them fully on the objectives, academic content and programme regulations of the programme; provide guidance on the conduct of teaching and assessment and any Faculty/Institute and University policies relating to these and be available to offer advice as required. Lecturers should provide marking schemes and/or model scripts to students who undertake marking for their modules. Teaching undertaken by doctoral students should be subject to the normal feedback mechanism operating within the Faculty. Where doctoral students undertake marking, their assessments should be sample second-marked by a member of the teaching staff on the programme concerned. Doctoral students may not perform second marking. Further guidance is available in the [*Policy on PGR Teaching*](http://simmspace.stmarys.ac.uk/prog-admin/research-students/Documents/PGR-Student-Documents/Regs-and-CoP/Policy%20on%20PGR%20teaching.pdf).

**7. APPOINTMENT OF SUPERVISORY TEAMS**

**7.1 Appointment of the Supervisory Team**

7.1.1 The University will appoint a supervisory team for each student which comprises at least two supervisors. The University appoints two types of research supervisor as follows:

* Director of Studies
* Research supervisor (more than one may be appointed for a multi-disciplinary project).

7.1.2 All students will have at least a Director of Studies and a Co-Supervisor. In addition, a research adviser may be allocated to supervisory team due to their specific subject specialist knowledge pertinent to the student’s programme of research.

7.1.3 There must be one formally identified point of contact between the student and the supervisory team and between the team and the University. This will normally be the Director of Studies.

**7.2 Director of Studies**

7.2.1 The Director of Studies is responsible for the overall direction of the student’s programme of study and research towards a University qualification and for the development of the student’s related understanding and skills and general progress (see below). He/she will also have a responsibility for the administration related to the student’s programme of study and is the initial contact for any pastoral issues.

**7.3 Appointment of Director of Studies**

7.3.1 The Research Degrees Committee is responsible for ratifying the appointment of a Director of Studies for each research student.

7.3.2 Appointment as Director of Studies will cease if the appointee ceases to hold an appointment as defined below, although it may be desirable in appropriate circumstances for him/her to remain as a research supervisor or adviser on the supervisory team. A new Director of Studies will then be appointed.

7.3.3 Where research projects involve more than one Faculty/Institute, the student should normally be allocated to the Faculty/Institute of the Director of Studies for administrative purposes. Where appropriate, one or more co-supervisor(s) should be appointed from the other participating Faculty/Institute.

7.3.4 Changes to the supervisory team should be kept to a minimum to ensure that a student’s studies are not unnecessarily disrupted. The Doctoral Programme Lead, in conjunction with the Associate Dean for Research and Enterprise/Institute Research Lead, is responsible for appointing appropriate and adequate supervisory cover in the event of the absence of the Director of Studies (e.g. sabbatical leave or on health grounds). In some instances it may be appropriate for an eligible Research Supervisor to fulfil the role of Director of Studies; in other instances, however, substitution of a new Director of Studies will be necessary (e.g. if the Research Supervisor does not fulfil the eligibility requirements). Any such cover arrangements should be monitored regularly. The student must be kept informed by the Faculty/Institute at all times of the arrangements for supervision.

**7.4 Eligibility of Director of Studies**

7.4.1 The Director of Studies should normally:

* Hold an appointment as a member of academic staff and have an expectation of holding such an appointment with the University for the remainder of the student’s period of study;
* Hold a doctoral award;
* Possess academic expertise in an area relevant to the student’s discipline;
* Have a minimum of one successful completion at doctoral programme level.

**7.5 Research Supervisor**

7.5.1 The Research Supervisor is responsible for assisting the Director of Studies in guiding the student’s programme of research.

**7.6 Appointment of Research Supervisor**

7.6.1 The Research Degrees Committee is responsible for ratifying the appointment of a research supervisor.

7.6.2 The appointment may not necessarily cease if the member of staff leaves the institution.

7.6.3 If required, a suitably qualified external research supervisor may be appointed, normally from either another Higher Education Institution or, an organisation with expertise appropriate to the student’s programme of study or research.

**7.7 Eligibility of Research Supervisor**

7.7.1 The Research Supervisor should normally:

* Hold an appointment as a member of academic staff and have an expectation of holding such an appointment with the University for the remainder of the student’s period of study, or else, should be a suitably qualified and experienced individual from outside the University;
* Hold a Doctoral award and/or;
* Have had prior experience of supervising doctoral students and hold a level 7 qualification;
* Possess academic expertise in an area relevant to the student’s discipline;
* Supervisors are required to have undertaken training prior to their first appointment to a supervisory team.

**7.8 Research Adviser**

7.8.1 A research adviser may be appointed in situations where additional expertise is required which would be of benefit to the research student and project

**7.9 Appointment of Research Adviser**

7.9.1The Research Degrees Committee is responsible for ratifying the appointment of a research adviser.

**7.10** **Eligibility of Research Adviser**

7.10.1The research adviser should normally:

* Hold an appointment as a member of academic staff and have an expectation of holding such an appointment with the University for the remainder of the student’s period of study, or else, should be suitability qualified and experienced individual from outside the University;
* Be able to demonstrate that their research, specialised knowledge or, professional background makes it appropriate for them to act in an advisory capacity;
* Not required to have doctoral supervisory experience.

**8. RESPONSIBILITIES**

**8.11 Responsibilities of the Supervisory Team**

8.11.1 The Supervisory Team are responsible for the following:

* The overall direction and development of the student’s programme of study and research and student welfare;
* Providing the student with guidance about the nature of research; about planning the research programme realistically, about the availability of and access to literature and other sources of information and about the difficulties associated with fraudulent misrepresentation of research, plagiarism and acknowledgement of the work of others;
* Discussing, agreeing and recording with students, at an early stage of their period of study, a programme of support and training designed specifically for the student’s particular needs and the area of research;
* Clarifying and agreeing with the students and their research supervisory team the boundaries of the relative responsibilities towards each other and the appropriate lines and means of communication;
* Ensuring that the student is aware of their responsibilities in terms of ethics and ethical behaviour in research;
* arranging a programme of contact, at least once a month, with the student in order to maintain effective oversight of the research project;
* giving the student detailed advice on the various stages of their work, completion dates and requirements to ensure that the student progresses through the project and submits the thesis (or equivalent) within a mutually agreed timescale aligned to the Research Degree Regulations;
* requesting written work in order to discharge Their responsibilities for the student’s successful progression and for consideration of confirmation of PhD registration, where appropriate. Written work should be returned in a reasonable time with constructive, written criticism (normally within four weeks of submission;
* making sure that the student is kept fully aware of their progress, in particular, where their progress gives cause for concern or if the standard of work falls below that generally expected. (*Students should be informed in writing of any serious concerns, together with guidance on what action(s) would be appropriate to address those concerns with an associated timescale)*;
* making sure that the student is made aware of the opportunities available for their professional skills development;
* Work with the student, to maintain record of personal progress, which includes reference to the development of research and other skills;
* Agreeing with the student arrangements for the confirmation of PhD registration process;
* Arranging the confirmation meeting – including inviting the supervisory team and independent Chair, informing Research Services of the date of the meeting and submitting the relevant reports following the confirmation meeting;
* Supporting and preparing the student for the final examination;
* Proposing external and internal examiners for the final examination; setting the date for the viva and making the appropriate arrangements with support from Research Services;
* Advising the student where to seek professional help if they encounter language difficulties, particularly in instances where English is not their first language;
* Conducting the interim and annual progress reviews, as required;
* Ensuring that, if the student’s research is linked with a research contract, their interests are safeguarded to ensure reasonable progress towards their higher degree;
* Keeping records as required with the University, including a record of each contact with their doctoral students, and to confirm with institutional requirements for the demonstration of good supervision.

**8.12 Responsibilities of Research Students**

8.12.1 The ultimate responsibility of the thesis lies with the research students and it is therefore essential that s/he participates fully in planning the research project, considering advice and discussing the work with the Director of Studies or supervisory team. Particular responsibilities of the research student will include:

* Progressing their research, ensuring that it is completed within any agreed timeframe and to seek guidance from their supervisory team to resolve difficulties, as necessary;
* Discussing with one or more members of the supervisory team the type of guidance and commitment found to be the most helpful, agreeing and adhering to a schedule of meetings;
* Maintaining accurate records of supervisory meetings and ensuring that written work is submitted in sufficient time to allow for comment and discussion before proceeding to the next stage;
* Analysing, with assistance from one or more members of the supervisory team, any initial or on-going training needs with respect to research and generic/transferable skills, and participating in appropriate training activities as advised by one or ore members of the supervisory team in order to meet these needs;
* Discussing the supervisory relationship with their Director of Studies at the earliest opportunity so that they understand their respective roles and obligations and to clarify any aspects which they do not fully understand;
* Providing regular statements on progress as part of the interim and annual monitoring review processes;
* Working the equivalent of at least a normal 40 hours week as full-time students and a 20 hour week as part-time students;
* Taking the initiative in raising problems or difficulties with the supervisory team. Where difficulties are perceived (by the research student) to stem from inadequate supervision, this should be raised with the relevant Doctoral Programme Lead and/or Research Services, as appropriate;
* Discussing with their Director of Studies arrangements and requirements for applying for confirmation of registration for PhD, and for submission of the final thesis;
* Attending conferences and participating in staff and research student seminars;
* Preparing papers for publication or presentation at conferences, as guided by the supervisory team;
* Discussing with their Director of Studies any financial aspects of funding for the research project;
* Exercising professionalism and being sensitive to the needs of colleagues with whom facilities are shared.

8.12.2 In addition, it is the responsibility of the research student to conform to the University’s Research Ethics Policy, Research Data Management Policy and health and safety guidelines.

**8.13 Responsibilities of the University**

8.13.1 Although much of the responsibility for ensuring the at student’s research reaches a successful completion is shared between the doctoral student and the supervisory team, the University (through the Research Degrees Committee), has overall responsibility for the process. The University should satisfy itself that the appropriate requirements of the Regulations and this Code of Practice are met.

*Research Environment*

8.13.2 Faculties/Institute should ensure that research students are accepted into an environment which provides support and facilities for their overall learning for their development as researchers.

8.13.3 The research environment plays a key role in ensuring that research students have the best possible opportunities to develop and bring their research projects to fruition.

* A collegial community of academic staff and postgraduates conducting excellent research in cognate areas;
* Supervisors with the necessary knowledge to support research students in working towards the successful completion of their research programmes;
* Sufficient implementation and monitoring mechanisms to ensure satisfactory progression through the project;
* Access to welfare and support facilities that recognise the distinctive nature of research degree study;
* The opportunity for students to raise complaints or appeal mechanisms for addressing research students’ feedback both as individuals and collectively.

*Facilities and Equipment*

8.13.5 Appropriate facilities and equipment to support students’ research should be made available, as appropriate and are likely to include:

* Access to appropriate space to work;
* Provision of laboratory and technical support, where appropriate;
* Appropriate access to photocopying and printing facilities;
* Opportunities to meet and network with other research students and researchers;
* Appropriate library and other academic support services;
* Opportunity to apply for Faculty/Institute funds to support training opportunities and for attendance at conferences and other relevant events.

8.13.6 Advice should be sought from the relevant services (eg. Student Services – disability and dyslexia support), with regard to accessing any specialist equipment or assistive technology for doctoral student who may need such support.

*Arrangements for research students based at a distance*

*8.13.7* Where students are admitted who are based at a distance from the University, satisfactory arrangements must be put in place to ensure as far as possible an equivalent experience to locally-based doctoral students, and that the University is able to meet the responsibilities outlined under **Responsibilities of the Supervisory Team.** Such arrangements will include:

* A specified number of face-to-face meetings with members of the supervisory team as appropriate which may be supplemented by email, video-conferencing and other means of communication;
* Access to appropriate training and personal development activities by means of existing training opportunities or, alternatively, equivalent training which may include web-based training or other distance means;
* Opportunity to network and interact with staff and fellow doctoral students, either face-to-face or through a virtual environment.

*Feedback Mechanisms*

*8.13.8* The University must have in place mechanisms to collect, review and, where appropriate, respond to feedback from doctoral students, supervisors, examiners and others concerned with doctoral degree programmes.

8.13.9 Arrangements should exist for obtaining individual and collective feedback and, when appropriate, for publishing the results of collective feedback and actions taken.

8.13.10The University strongly encourages research students to participate in appropriate national surveys.

8.13.11Research Services should also collect, review and, where appropriate, respond to research student feedback on their training activities. Wherever possible, feedback should be gathered and processed anonymously.

*Submission and Completion Rates*

8.13.12The Research Degrees Committee should monitor submission and completion rates for both full-time and part-time research students, and report on these in the annual quality monitoring cycle.

*Teaching and Demonstrating Duties*

8.13.13Having completed appropriate training run by the University, research students may be offered the opportunity to undertake teaching or demonstrating duties, providing that this does not encroach on their studies.

8.13.14Directors of Study should ensure that teaching activities do not make excessive demands on doctoral students and they ensure that they follow the [*Policy on PGR Teaching*](http://simmspace.stmarys.ac.uk/prog-admin/research-students/Documents/PGR-Student-Documents/Regs-and-CoP/Policy%20on%20PGR%20teaching.pdf).

**9. MONITORING AND SUPPORTING STUDENT PROGRESS**

9.1 Supervisory meetings

9.1.2 Regular meetings will be the prime mechanism of monitoring progress and for

academic feedback between supervisors and students. Where research is being conducted at a distance an effective method(s) of regular contact shall be agreed between the student and Director of Studies (e.g. telephone, email, video-conferencing). Contact should be made at least monthly with full time and part time students and recorded on the appropriate Contact Sheet.

9.1.3 A minimum of eight formal supervisory meetings should take place in each academic year. Supervisory teams and students should agree the general frequency and nature of these supervisory meetings. Where a submission of work is required, students should be provided with sufficient notice of any deadline.

9.1.4 Records of the date and outcomes of supervisory meetings should be kept by the supervisory team and the students.

**9.2 Progress review meetings and reports**

9.2.1 The University requires progress review meetings to be held twice a year, one of which will be in the form of the annual progress review. The purpose of this procedure is to provide formal academic feedback to the student and to provide a mechanism for reporting progress and concerns of the student or supervisory team to the Research Degrees Committee.

9.2.2 Review meetings should be conducted in person between the student and the supervisory team. Review meetings may be conducted at a distance by a method agreed between the student and the Director of Studies (e.g. video-conferencing), typically where students are conducting research abroad.

**9.3 Interim review**

9.4.1 A review of progress should take place around February each year (students commencing their course in February will be exempt from the interim review in year one of the programme). It will take the form of a normal supervisory meeting with some formal recording of general progress and any concerns or issues that may need to be addressed later at the Annual Progress Review meeting.

9.4.2 The review should be discussed at the Faculty/Institute Research Committee and an overview report should be produced by the Doctoral Programme Lead for discussion at the Research Degrees Committee.

**9.4 Annual Progress Review**

9.4.1 An annual review of progress, recorded on a standard pro-forma, is required normally in May/June. This is a requirement for a student continuing on their research programme. Guidance on the annual review is provided to each student via the Doctoral Programme Lead and also via the student intranet.

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9.4.2 Students who are temporarily withdrawn from registration at the deadline for the annual progress review need not be reviewed at that time, but the Research Degrees Committee must be notified of all students in this position.

9.4.3 The Director of Studies is responsible for collecting all sections of the Annual Progress Report Form, ensuring that all sections are signed by the appropriate parties and submitting the completed report to the Faculty/Institute Doctoral Programme Lead.

9.4.4 At the progress review meeting, the report of the student will be discussed with the student and the supervisory team, and actions will be agreed, where appropriate.

9.4.5 The report will be signed by all parties and submitted to the Faculty/Institute Research Committees which will consider any action noted by the supervisory team and identify any further actions required by the Faculty (such as quality or resource issues and agreement to any training package to be supported by the Faculty).

9.4.6 Following review by Faculty/Institute Research Committees, Annual Progress Review Reports will be submitted for consideration and approval by the Research Degrees Committee.

**9.5 Unsatisfactory progress**

9.5.1 A student’s registration may be terminated on the grounds of unsatisfactory academic progress. If the Director of Studies judges a student’s progress to be unsatisfactory, they will inform the student and provide them with appropriate opportunities to address these concerns. The student will be offered at least three months to meet specified targets. If these concerns are not addressed to the satisfaction of the Director of Studies, they will consult the Faculty/Institute Doctoral Programme Lead. If further action is required, the documentary evidence to support termination of studies will be referred to the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee for a decision and reported to the Research Degrees Committee meeting.

9.5.2 The University will write to the student informing them that their progress has been deemed unsatisfactory and that they have not shown evidence to support them remaining on the programme. The student will be given one month to respond after which they will be withdrawn from their programme.

9.5.3. Where a student makes a request for the recognition of extenuating circumstances during or after the specified period, this will be considered and if found to be valid, the deadline will normally be extended by up to three months subject to the approval of the Research Degrees Committee.

**9.6 Extensions to studies and temporary withdrawal from studies**

9.6.1A student may apply for an extension to the maximum period of registration or re-submission period by submitting a request via their Director of Studies to the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee. The maximum extension to a period of registration is six months aggregate. All requests for extensions must have the support of the supervisory team and the Faculty/Institute PGR Lead. The Regulations for Research Degree Programmes provides possible indicators for eligibility to apply for an extension to the maximum period of registration.

9.6.2 A student may apply for a temporary withdrawal from studies. A temporary withdrawal from studies can be up to twelve month aggregate. A student may apply for a temporary withdrawal from their studies (interruption) by submitting a request via their Director of Studies to the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee. All requests for temporary withdrawal must have the support of the supervisory team and the Faculty/Institute PGR Lead. The Regulations for Research Degree Programmes provides possible indicators for eligibility to apply for a temporary withdrawal from studies.

**9.7 Holidays**

9.7.1 Full-timeresearch students may take up to eight weeks holiday each year of their programme including public holidays and University closure days. For part-time doctoral students, this is applicable on a pro-rata basis. Holidays should not normally be taken during the academic term. International research students on a Tier 4 visa should refer to the International Office or to the University website.

**10 THE PhD CONFIRMATION PROCESS**

10.1 The confirmation process is independent from, and additional to, the monitoring processes outlined above and is the main formal interim assessment for doctoral students hoping to continue to a PhD award.

10.2 The principal aims of the confirmation procedure will include the following

* to evaluate the candidate's approach to the research problem in terms of the theory and proposed or adopted research methods, in order to establish that the future objectives and methods are feasible and likely to form a suitable and sufficient programme for PhD candidature
* to ensure that the candidate has maintained the motivation to complete a thesis/ portfolio and within a reasonable timescale
* to consider evidence that modules/courses designated specifically for research students or identified and agreed with individual students as a requirement necessary to support their research studies have been completed satisfactorily
* to provide the candidate with an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the research and its presentation
* to consider arrangements for supervision and facilities for the work and ensure that both are appropriate for the efficient completion of the project.

10.3 In accordance with the Research Degree Regulations, the confirmation procedure will normally take place:

* for full-time students; 12-15 months after full registration
* for part-time students: 24-30 months after full registration

10.4 It is a requirement that the confirmation procedure will entail a meeting in which students will present and discuss a written submission on their research.

10.5 Candidates will be required to submit a written report of normally 20,000 words, or in the case of a student who is undertaking performance or practice-based research, a combined submission of scholarly writing and creative work in the ratio which has been agreed with the supervisory team. The work submitted should comprise the following material:

* a definition of the research problem, presenting the objectives of the research, the central ideas and concept+
* a brief statement of any courses/modules or other training undertaken, as agreed with the supervisor, to underpin the research programme
* a summary of progress to date, including a discussion of the relevant literature (where appropriate, a bibliography of primary and secondary works) and a reasoned case for the research methods adopted thus far; and findings to date+
* any material already published
* an outline of future plans for the research, together with an indication of what other methods, if any, it is intended to use+
* a time plan for the future research through to submission of the thesis.

[+ *The material summarised above may be submitted or required in the form of one or more draft chapters or in the form of collated and summarised progress report(s).*]

10.6 The confirmation meeting will be organised by the supervisory team and will involve

a panel, comprising:

* An independent chair from within the University normally with some knowledge of the field, but independent of the research programme
* The supervisory team.

10.7 The supervisory team and student should agree an outline schedule for the timing of the meeting of the confirmation panel within the time limits defined in the Research Degree Regulations. The schedule should take account of the need for the student to produce a written report and for the transfer panel to have sufficient time (at least 7 days) to read it in advance of the meeting.

10.8 In accordance with Regulations, it is a requirement that, in consultation with the supervisory team, the independent chair will make one of the following recommendations to the University’s Research Degrees Committee:

* Progress satisfactory and registration confirmed: all subsequent annual

registrations to be for PhD

* Progress unsatisfactory and the student’s registration should not be   
  confirmed at this stage, but that the student may resubmit for confirmation   
  of registration on a single occasion only, normally three months later for full-   
  time students or six months later for part-time students, with or without   
  further oral examination.
  1. All students are only eligible for a single re-assessment which will normally lead to one

of the following three outcomes:

* The student be permitted to continue registration on the degree
* Progress satisfactory for MPhil only
* Progress unsatisfactory, studies terminated.

10.10 Following the confirmation review, it is a requirement that each candidate will receive the recommendation to be made to the Research Degrees Committee. He/she will also receive details of any areas of perceived weakness in the work and/or any required or recommended changes to the work within a specified timescale.

10.11 The outcome of the confirmation review will be approved by the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee on behalf of the Research Degrees Committee and reported to the next meeting.

10.12 Students will be formally notified of the decision of the Research Degrees Committee.

10.13 A student has the right to appeal against the decision of the panel (see section 18).

**11 UPGRADE FROM MPHIL TO PHD**

11.1 In exceptional cases, a student who may have initially registered may, with the support of the supervisory team, made an application to upgrade from MPhil to PhD.

11.2 In accordance with the Research Degree Regulations, the application to upgrade to PhD should normally take place within two years of initial registration for full-time students and three years of initial registration for part-time students.

11.3 Candidates will be required to produce a written report of normally 20,000 words in length, or in the case of a student who is undertaking performance or practice-based research, a combined submission of scholarly writing and creative work in the ration which has been agreed with the supervisory team; the content of the scholarly work should be such as to provide evidence demonstrating the student’s ability to sustain work and scholarly writing at doctoral level.

11.4 Candidates should produce, as part of the 20,000 word report. The work submitted should comprise;

* a definition of the research problem, presenting the objectives of the research, the central ideas and concept+
* a brief statement of any courses/modules or other training undertaken, as agreed with the supervisor, to underpin the research programme
* a summary of progress to date, including a discussion of the relevant literature (where appropriate, a bibliography of primary and secondary works) and a reasoned case for the research methods adopted thus far; and findings to date+
* any material already published
* an outline of future plans for the research, together with an indication of what other methods, if any, it is intended to use+
* a time plan for the future research through to submission of the thesis.

[+ *The material summarised above may be submitted or required in the form of one or more draft chapters or in the form of collated and summarised progress report(s).*]

11.5 The upgrade meeting will be organised by the supervisory team and will involve

a panel, comprising:

* An independent chair from within the University normally with knowledge of the field but independent of the research programme;
* The supervisory team.

11.6 The supervisory team and student should agree an outline schedule for the timing of the meeting of the upgrade panel within the time limits defined in the Research Degree Regulations. The schedule should take account of the need for the student to produce a written report and for the upgrade panel to have sufficient time (at least 7 days) to read it in advance of the meeting.

11.7 In accordance with Regulations, it is a requirement that, in consultation with the supervisory team, the independent chair will make one of the following recommendations to the University’s Research Degrees Committee:

* that the student be permitted to transfer their registration to the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

or:

* that the student’s transfer to PhD registration should not be confirmed, but that the student be invited to re-apply for transfer within a prescribed timescale (normally three months for full time students and six months for part-time students)

or:

* that the student should remain registered for the Degree of Master of Philosophy

11.8 Following the upgrade panel, it is a requirement that each candidate will receive the recommendation to be made to the Research Degrees Committee. He/she will also receive details of any areas of perceived weakness in the work and/or any required or recommended changes to the work within a specified timescale.

11.9 The outcome of the upgrade will be approved by the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee on behalf of the Research Degrees Committee and reported to the next meeting.

11.10 Students will be formally notified of the decision of the Research Degrees Committee.

11.11 A student has the right to appeal against the decision of the panel (see section 18).

**12 PREPARATION FOR THE FINAL EXAMINATION**

12.1 The thesis is the presentation of original work by the student. While the supervisory team may offer guidance before the submission of the thesis, the ultimate responsibility for the content must rest with the student. Such guidance may include advice on structure, content and presentation of the thesis. While advice or opinions offered by a member of the supervisory team will be given in good faith, it is not the role of the supervisory team to make an assessment of the standard of a student’s final thesis or to predict the likely outcome of the final examination. This is a judgement that only examiners can make.

**12.2 Completing student status**

12.2.1 The regulations permit students who have completed their research and are preparing their final thesis, who meet specific conditions, and after a time limit specified in the regulations, to apply to the Research Degrees Committee to transfer to “completing status”. This status requires the approval of the Director of Studies. In these circumstances the student is no longer using specialist facilities of the University connected with the completing their thesis. There will be limited supervisory contact with the continuing student, connected to advice about preparation of and submission of the final thesis. A general level of contact should be agreed on an individual basis prior to transfer to continuing status. Students requiring more than this level of support should continue to re-register on their original mode of attendance (either full time or part time).

**12.3 Intention to Submit**

12.3.1 A student must complete the ’Intention to Submit Form’ via their Director of Studies to Research Services at least two months prior to the intended submission date. If a student does not meet their intended submission date, they will be required to complete a further ‘Intention to Submit Form’ indicating a new thesis submission date.

**12.4 Nomination of Examiners**

12.4.1 At least two months prior to the intended examination date, the supervisory team must submit to Research Services, the completed examiner nomination forms for approval by the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee.

12.4.2 Research students will normally be examined by an internal and external examiner and the examination will be chaired by an Independent Chair from the University. Where the candidate is a member of staff at the University both examiners will be external to the University. The Research Degree Regulations provide guidance on the eligibility criteria for examiners.

**12.5 Format of thesis**

12.5.1 The format of the thesis or portfolio is defined in the Research Degree Regulations. The thesis or portfolio should include a signed Declaration of Originality available online at: [http://simmspace.stmarys.ac.uk/prog-admin/research-students/Pages/Submission-of-Thesis-and-Viva-Voce.aspx](http://simmspace.smuc.ac.uk/prog-admin/research-students/Pages/Submission-of-Thesis-and-Viva-Voce.aspx)

12.5.2 The thesis must be written in English. It must include an abstract (approximately 300 words) and must acknowledge published or other sources of references consulted. The Research Degree Regulations stipulate the minimum and maximum expected word limits for MPhil and PhD.

12.5.3 The thesis should be typed on A4 size paper and it is recommended that a margin of 4 centimetres should be maintained on the side of the paper which is to be bound. All pages should be numbered. The title page should bear the approved title, the student’s name, the name of St Mary's University, the degree for which the student is registered and the year in which the thesis or portfolio is presented. No alterations or additions may be made to a thesis or portfolio after it has been submitted except with the agreement of the examiners.

12.5.4 Where work forms part of a collaborative group project, the thesis must indicate clearly the students’ individual contribution and the extent of collaboration. Any published material must be mentioned in the thesis and copies of reprints etc. placed in a secured pocket at the end of, or bound in, the thesis.

12.5.5 For the final submission for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by Publication (see Appendix 3), the bound portfolio of works must be accompanied by an analytical commentary of approximately 10,000-15,000 words that explains the unifying themes that run through the research and places the works in the context of existing work in the field and the applicant’s research career.

**12.6 Submission of thesis/portfolio**

12.6.1 The candidate is responsible for submitting, at least six weeks in advance of the viva voce examination, to Research Services three copies of the thesis in the form prescribed by the Research Degree Regulations. An electronic copy of the final thesis must also be submitted to Research Services.

12.6.2 The thesis must be accompanied by a University thesis/portfolio submission form. Part B of this form will be signed by the University, and returned to the candidate as a receipt. The candidate is advised to retain this as proof of submission.

12.6.3 An abstract of the work, not exceeding 300 words in length, must be included in each copy of the title page.

12.6.4 Research Services will send a copy of the thesis to each examiner along with relevant documentation.

12.7 Early submission of Thesis/ Portfolio

12.7.1 Any registered research student may apply for early submission

provided that such submission will not take place within the first 24 months of registration (FT) or 36 months (PT).

12.7.2 Such an application must be made in the first place to the Director of Studies (or equivalent) who will assess the body of work/progress and give opinion on whether or not this is likely to be sufficient to permit the early submission of an adequate thesis in the field.

12.7.3 Where the Director of Studies/ supervisory team support the application, they will append a brief independent written assessment of the work outlining the reasons that underpin this assessment. Approval by the Director of Studies/ supervisory team will not prejudge or guarantee the outcome of any subsequent examinations.

12.7.4 Applications supported by Director of Studies/ supervisory team should be countersigned by the Doctoral Programme Lead and forwarded to the Research Degrees Committee who will consider the application together with any other relevant information relating to the student’s registration and status.

12.7.5 Submission must occur within 6 months of permission being granted and, if it does not take place, registration will revert to the usual periods and time limits.

Agreement to permit early submission will not alter the qualifying periods for transfer to continuing status.

12.7.6 The University will inform students who are granted permission to submit early.

12.8 Arrangements for the Viva Voce Examination

12.8.1 The arrangements for the viva are made by the Director of Studies and communicated to Research Services.

12.9 Preparation for the Viva Voce Examination

12.9.1 Research students will have been encouraged to prepare for the viva voce examination in a number of ways. They will have been asked to speak about their work and to give presentations. In addition, students may have already presented papers at conferences. Students will be given advice and information regarding the viva voce examination by the Director of Studies, and will be given appropriate information as to how to prepare for the examination, in advance.

12.9.2 Mock Viva

12.9.3 It is recommended that research students also undertake a ‘mock’ viva. Although the lines of questioning may not replicate the final viva, it will allow students to defend their thesis under examination conditions, and to provide experience of focusing on and answering different types of questions about the thesis. This experience can help foster skills useful for the actual viva, such as defending ideas, thinking on one's feet and coping with pressure. The ‘mock’ viva will be organised by the Director of Studies (DoS), and may be carried out in alternative formats. Other members of academic staff may be asked to read the thesis, and will invite students to defend their work to them.

12.9.4 The mock examination should be conducted at a suitable time in advance of the viva to allow the candidate sufficient time to act on issues raised.

13 THE FINAL EXAMINATION

13.1 Nature of examination

* + 1. The final examination for doctoral degree programmes comprises:
* an initial assessment of the written thesis or portfolio;
* an oral examination, *viva voce.*

**13.2 Examiners and Independent Chair**

13.2.1 It is the responsibility of the Faculty/Institute in which the candidate is registered to make arrangements for the *viva voce* examination. This will normally be held at the University but, exceptionally, it may be held remotely but video-conference. This arrangement is subject to approval by the Research Degree Committee.

13.2.2 With the letter of appointment, the University will send the appointee :

* a web link to the Research Degree Regulations;
* the initial examination report form template;
* an expense claim form

13.2.3 The examination will be conducted by a Panel of Examiners, comprising at least two examiners approved by the University in accordance with the Research Degree Regulations.

13.2.4 Meetings of the examiners shall have an independent Chair. The independent Chair will normally be appointed from within the same School but should not have had any prior formal involvement with the project or the student. The independent Chair will be responsible for ensuring the proper and fair conduct of the meeting, including conformity with the Research Degree Regulations and this Code of Practice.

13.2.5 The independent Chair will sign the final joint examination report to confirm that the examination took place according to the Research Degree Regulations, resulting in one of the permitted outcomes by the Regulations. Following the viva voce examination they will be responsible for ensuring that documentation is properly completed ready for submission to the Research Degrees Committee; that, when appropriate, the student is provided with the list of minor corrections in a timely manner and that the examiners’ reports are collated and returned to Research Services.In the event of a resubmission outcome, the examiners will prepare a Statement of Requirements which will be passed to the independent Chair for sending to the student and Research Services.

13.2.6 At least one of the examiners must be external to and independent of the University; if the student is a member of the academic staff of the University, at least two examiners must be external to and independent of the University. At least one of the examiners will have previous experience of examination a doctoral award.

13.2.7 None of the appointed examiners can have acted as Director of Studies, Co- Supervisor or Research Adviser to the student. The same external examiner cannot be used more than three times in a five year period.

**13.3 Conduct of the Examination**

13.3.1 The content of the thesis, the conduct of the examination of a student and matters related thereto shall be regarded as confidential to those taking part in the examination and to appropriate officers of the University until such time as the outcomes of the examination are agreed by the Research Degrees Committee.

13.3.2 Each appointed examiner will receive a copy of the thesis to be examined in advance of the *viva voce* examination and will prepare an independent, written report on the content and style of the thesis. The reports will be submitted to the independent Chair of the examination panel and considered at the *viva voce* examination.

13.3.3 The *viva voce* examination is concerned with the content of the thesis and any related matters which the examiners consider appropriate. The student should expect to be questioned by the examiners on the thesis*; inter alia*, on the focus of the research, existing literature, the methodology used, the conduct of the research, the outcomes and conclusions.

13.3.4 One member of the supervisory team may be present at the *viva voce* examination. However, a student may request not to allow a member of the supervisory team to be present. Such requests should be made to the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee. The member of the supervisory team must not participate in the examination and may only speak at the behest of the independent Chair.

13.3.5 No persons other that the above shall be present at or otherwise take part in the *viva voce* examination.

13.3.6 Recording of the oral examination will not normally be permitted.

**14 OUTCOMES OF THE EXAMINATION**

14.1 The examiners will consider the content of their written reports and, taken together with the outcomes of the *viva voce* examination, will, prepare a joint report on the examination to the University Research Degrees Committee in the manner prescribed in the Regulations. The examiners are at liberty to prepare separate reports, however, if they so wish.

14.2 They will jointly make one of the recommendations specified in the Research Degree Regulations as follows:

* award of the MPhil or PhD degree. (They may be required to make minor typographical corrections to the thesis, and/or to make other very minor non-substantive changes to the thesis prior to final submission of hard-bound copy);
* award of the degree but with minor revisions permitted to be made to the thesis within a period not exceeding more than three months;
* award of the degree subject to major revisions being made within a period not exceeding more than six months;
* no award of the degree but permission granted to re-submit the thesis within twelve months and be examined, with or, without, a further *viva voce* examination;
* that those students registered for the PhD, that the degree not be awarded but the student be permitted to submit a revised thesis for the degree of Master of Philosophy be awarded, if appropriate, after specified minor revisions have been made to the thesis within six months;
* that for those students registered for the PhD, that degree not be awarded but the student be permitted to submit a revised thesis, for the degree of Master of Philosophy, normally within twelve months with or without further research, and be examined with or without a further *viva voce* examination;
* that the degree not be awarded and no recommendation regarding a resubmission of the thesis.

14.3 The completed examiners’ report and recommendations, shall be forwarded to Research Services for approval by the Research Degrees Committee.

14.4 If the examiners are unable to agree on a recommendation, the independent

chair will mediate and confirm a recommendation. In such a case, the independent

chair will write a separate report detailing the rationale for both the mediation and the

recommendation which will be submitted to the Research Degrees Committee for a

decision.

14.5 In the event that the examiners’ recommendation involves either permitting or requiring that the student makes minor or major specified corrections to the thesis prior to the award, the independent chair of the viva voce examination will notify the student of the corrections to be made and the timescale in which the corrections should be made in accordance with the Regulations for Research Degrees.

14.6 In the event that the examiners’ recommendation permits the student to submit a revised thesis/portfolio, the written report – the Statement of Requirements - to the student will make clear the reasons for the examiners’ rejection of the original thesis. The report will specify a timescale by which the revised submission should be made as governed by the Research Degree Regulations.

14.7 The student may also be liable for tuition fees and/or re-examination fees.

14.8 Examiners' reports are regarded as confidential to the University. Examiners' reports may be made available to persons outside the University only with the prior agreement of the University and the author(s). A copy of the report made to the student will be retained on the student’s file.

* 1. Research Services should keep an overview of examiners’ general remarks relating to research student provision and progress.

## FITNESS TO STUDY

15.1 The procedure sets out the formal steps which will be taken by the University when there is concern that a student’s behaviour or health is seriously disrupting his/her academic progress, the student’s welfare or that of other members of the University community, or has the potential to do so.

15.2 The University Fitness to Study policy is available on the student intranet – [www.simmspace.stmarys.ac.uk](http://www.simmspace.stmarys.ac.uk)

15.3 It sets out the policy for student behaviour in relation to professional practice and procedures to be followed where a student is considered to have acted in a manner that makes them unfit to practise in their chosen profession.

15.4 Research students have access to support from Student Wellbeing Services in relation to support for dyslexia, disability, mental health, etc – [www.simmspace@stmarys.ac.uk](http://www.simmspace@stmarys.ac.uk).

**16 ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT AND PLAGIARISM**

16.1 The University defines academic misconduct or academic fraud as committing an act whereby the researcher knowingly and deliberately seeks to corrupt, misrepresent or to falsify the outcomes of academic and/or professional study, scholarship and/or research. The University reserves the right to identify and define different forms of academic misconduct or fraud from time to time: however, as they relate to research, they are generally taken by the University to align with the principals of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity – [www.stmarys.ac.uk/research](http://www.stmarys.ac.uk/research) and include:

1. misrepresentation of the work or expressed thoughts of others as one’s own without permission or acknowledgement (plagiarism)
2. fabrication of:
   * results of work which he/she falsely claims to have undertaken (for example, experiments, interviews, observations or other forms of research and investigation)
   * results which he or she has not obtained or has obtained but in a context different to that claimed
   * results by omission from analysis and publication of selected components of a data set
   * research dissemination (for example: false claims of publication of work).
3. deliberate exploitation of ideas and concepts of others without acknowledgement
4. cheating or otherwise disclosing information with the intent of gaining for oneself or for another an unfair advantage
5. intentional damage to, or removal of, the research-related property of another
6. intentional non-compliance with the terms and conditions governing the award of external funding for research or with the University’s policies and procedures relating to research, including accounting requirements, ethics and health and safety regulations.

16.2 Any allegation or complaint of academic misconduct or fraud in research will be investigated and dealt with in accordance with the University’s Academic Misconduct Process.

16.3 If the allegations are proven, it will result in termination from the research programme. If identified prior to the *viva voce* examination or at the point of examination, it will result in a fail with no opportunity to resit. A degree award may be rescinded if an allegation is subsequently proven.

16.4 In order to provide appropriate guidance to students and to obviate misunderstanding, students are strongly recommended to be familiar with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity, the Code of Practice for Research and the Procedures for Dealing with Allegations of Misconduct – [www.stmarys.ac.uk/research](http://www.stmarys.ac.uk/research). Ignorance by students of such matters should not be a defence.

16.4 In particular, it is in the interests both of the students and the University to take all reasonable steps to advise students on the protocols associated with the use and citing of the ideas and words of others, including those of fellow students.

16.5 Students are reminded that the work they submit for assessment must be their own. To this end the following points should be noted:

All theses submitted for research degrees must carry the following statement of originality signed and dated by the student:

1. This thesis and the work to which it refers are the results of your own efforts. Any ideas, data or text resulting from the work of others (whether published or unpublished) are fully identified as such within the work and attributed to the originator in the text, bibliography or footnotes

1. This thesis has not been submitted in whole or in part for any other academic degree or professional qualification at this or any other institution.
2. Any chapters that describe the outcomes of joint research should be clearly identified as such with a statement inserted as a footnote on the first page and contributors named. Significant data, images or text resulting from the input of other researchers should be identified as such and attributed to the persons concerned by means of a footnote within the chapter.
3. It is usual to acknowledge the help and guidance of others who have assisted you during your research and preparation of your thesis. Such acknowledgements do not replace or obviate the need for individual attribution as discussed in points 1 and 3.
4. The University reserves the right to submit electronic versions of your draft documents for assessment of plagiarism using electronic detection software such as ‘turnitin’. In addition, whether or not drafts have been so assessed, the University will require an electronic version of the final document ( as submitted) for assessment.

The Declaration of Originality document is available at:

<http://simmspace/prog-admin/research-students/Pages/Submission-of-Thesis-and-Viva-Voce.aspx> **17 COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

17.1 It is expected that every effort will be made by the parties concerned to resolve an issue by mutual agreement.

17.2 The Complaints procedures are outlined in the University’s Complaints Procedure -

<http://simmspace.stmarys.ac.uk>.

17.3 In recognition of the particular situation of research students the following procedures apply to grievances concerning the provision of research supervision:

* Complaints should be taken up directly with the Director of Studies in the first instance, who will bring his/her best efforts to bear with appropriate University colleagues to resolve the matter with you, or on your behalf.
* In the event that the complaint arises from the working relationship with one of the

supervisory team, the matter should normally be raised directly with another member of the supervisory team in the first instance with a view to resolving the matter.

* If the complaint cannot be resolved satisfactorily directly with or by your Director of Studies, you should write to the Faculty Doctoral Programme Lead.
* If the case of dissatisfaction of the research supervision persists, students should approach the Faculty Doctoral Programme Lead, setting out in writing the difficulties which are unresolved as outlined in the Complaints Procedure. The Faculty Doctoral Programme Lead will discuss the matter with both the supervisor and with the student. If a resolution cannot be found, the Faculty Doctoral Programme Lead may, *inter alia*, make arrangements for the student to be assigned to another supervisor.
* Where the supervisor is also the Faculty Doctoral Programme Lead or Associate Dean for Research & Enterprise, students should approach Research Services.
* The Head of Research Services will consider the point(s) of grievance and will discuss it with the Head of School/Dean of Faculty, as appropriate.

17.4 If the difficulties remain unresolved students should refer to the stage 2 of the University’s Complaints Procedure - [www.stmarys.ac.uk/complaints](http://www.stmarys.ac.uk/complaints).

17.5 It is expected that every effort will be made by the parties concerned to resolve an issue by mutual agreement.

18 APPEALS PROCEDURE

18.1 Students who are not satisfied with the outcome of their final examination, confirmation or upgrade, may appeal to the University and should follow the appeal procedure – [www.stmarys.ac.uk/appeals](http://www.stmarys.ac.uk/appeals).

18.2 The University’s Academic Regulations prescribe the only acceptable grounds for appeal as:

* that the examination had not been conducted in accordance with the Regulations or there had been a material irregularity or omission in its conduct such that the result might have been affected
* that the student believed that performance in the examination had been materially impaired by ill health or other circumstances which the student had been unable, for valid reasons, to divulge to the Examiners
* that the student had reason to believe that one or more of the Examiners was prejudiced or biased.