

## **PART TWO - NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY CODE OF PRACTICE FOR RESEARCH DEGREE PROGRAMMES (UPDATED AUGUST 2021)**

*Information outlined in this Code of Practice is accurate at the date of publication, but changes to programmes and University services may be necessary, for example; to meet the requirements of an accrediting body or to keep courses up to date and in line with contemporary practices or areas of study; or as a result of circumstances outside the reasonable control of the University. Please see the University's [Terms and Conditions](#) for further information.*

*Where reference is made to any named University role, such references are to be read as including reference to their nominees.*

*This Code of Practice uses Academic Unit as an overarching term for School and Institute.*

### **Introduction**

1. Newcastle University is a leading research-intensive university with a distinguished record of advancing knowledge and understanding through the pursuit of research and scholarship. As part of its commitment to research it provides, through its three-faculty structure, a range of research programmes designed to enable postgraduate students to undertake research training and to make their own contribution to knowledge and understanding in their subject.
2. The purpose of this Code of Practice is to set out the University's standards for its research programmes.
3. This Code of Practice will be used by PhDs, MPhils, MDs and the thesis element of any doctorate level programme including Integrated PhDs and Professional Doctorates. Any research programme wishing to be exempt will require UEC approval. (Please see the addendum at the end of the code for clarification on standards relating to research masters' programmes).

### **The Research Environment**

4. The University will only permit research programmes to be offered where it is confident that students can be trained and supported within an environment which is supportive of research.
5. It defines such an environment as where an Academic Unit:
  - Is able to demonstrate significant international research excellence as demonstrated by the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE)/ Research Excellence Framework (REF)
  - Has a critical mass of staff to act as suitable supervisors
  - Satisfies the requirements of the University Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework including acceptable submission and completion rates that meet the requirements for the Research Council in that subject area.

- Provides appropriate facilities.

6. The University defines provision of facilities to meet the appropriate standard as follows:

- [Working Space](#)

Research degree students can expect working space in appropriate shared office/open-plan/hot-desk accommodation, with adequate access, heating, ventilation and security arrangements. Students should be given reasonable space for the secure and safe storage of essential books, consumables, personal belongings and research data. In addition, students undertaking laboratory/studio-based research projects can expect access to bench/studio space and associated facilities (see below).

Where a research degree student is working on a multi-disciplinary project (across different academic units and/or Faculties), there should be a discussion at the start of their studies about the appropriate working arrangements, resulting in the identification of the lead and secondary sites. The secondary site should allocate appropriate facilities to the student, where needed.

If there is disruption to students' working space, as a consequence, for example, of maintenance or construction work, then students can expect to be advised by their Academic Unit regarding the impact on their study and can expect reasonable steps to be taken to minimise any such disruption including, if necessary, provision of alternative accommodation.

- [Access to Laboratory/Studio/Workshop Space etc. \(where relevant\)](#)

Research degree students can expect to be given bench space and facilities to conduct their approved research project, including any laboratory consumables and access to equipment and facilities agreed by the project approval panel to be necessary and within the budget for that project. Equipment approved for the research project will be provided in a timely manner and maintained in good working order throughout the project. Students will receive proper health and safety training in the use of the necessary equipment and consumables and should receive an induction into the required conduct and working practices of the laboratory/studio/workshop.

- [Consumables](#)

Research degree students can expect to be provided with:

- Appropriate supply of normal office consumables, including paper for black and white printing on campus.
- Access to reasonable black and white photocopying, as agreed with their supervisor in connection with their research.
- Where the student is using a computer work station, it shall comply with the schedule to the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations.
- Lab/day books as needed.
- Access to a telephone, with reasonable telephone calls in connection with their research, which may be logged.

- [IT Equipment](#)

Research degree students can expect access to a networked PC and printer. They should have access to a scanner, if and when needed. Where the research project so requires, a research degree student can expect to have access to a more powerful PC capable, for example, of handling complex, large-set data analysis, or set up with

specialist software in line with their approved project.

- [NU Reflect and PGR CoP system](#)

All students should have access to [NU Reflect](#) and the [PGR CoP system](#) and are required to maintain and record formal supervisions, training, project approval and progress.

- [Funding for Conference Attendance and Travel](#)

Research degree students should have a reasonable opportunity to attend and/or participate in a conference, with the agreement of their supervisor and subject to available funding. Research degree students should contact their Academic Unit for further information on available funding. A record of attendance should be kept on the PGR CoP system.

- [Social Facilities](#)

To facilitate social interaction, research degree students can expect to have access to common room facilities, which may combine with staff common rooms if this is agreed by the Academic Unit

7. In the case of Academic Units or research groupings which for any reason do not meet the normal criterion the University may, on the advice of the Dean of Postgraduate Studies, authorise the offering of research degrees where there is evidence that research of at least national standing is being undertaken in the applicant's specific subject and that the other conditions set out above have been or will be met.

### **Pre-Entry Information**

8. In order to enable students to make an informed choice, the University requires that units offering research degrees provide clear, accurate and comprehensive pre-entry information to potential applicants. This should inform them as fully as possible about the relevant programme including research opportunities, training, resources, completion times, expectations and demands upon research students (including financial ones), entry requirements, the admissions process, information about scholarships, and appropriate contacts. Pre-entry information should also give relevant information for potential applicants with disabilities and a contact in the Student Health and Wellbeing Service.

### **Entry Standards and Applications**

9. The University defines the minimum standard for admission to research programmes as normally an Upper Second-Class Honours degree in a relevant subject or a relevant Master's degree. Any subject-specific qualification requirements should be identified to applicants via the University's prospectus or Academic Unit research grouping information.

10. In addition, for applicants whose first language is not English, the University requires evidence of acceptable competence in the language to be submitted at the time of application.

11. All applicants are required to submit the names of two recent academic referees or one academic and a professional employer who can comment knowledgeably upon their suitability for research in the relevant field.

### **Selection of Research Students**

12. In order to assist the match between student, research project, supervisor(s) and

institution the University requires that there should be rigorous selection policies and procedures.

13. The University requires that selection policies and procedures should be put in writing. These should normally include:

- a policy of involving at least two experienced and research-active academics in the selection process, normally one of whom will form part of the supervisory team and one will act on behalf of the Head of Academic Unit to approve the offer of a place:
  - who have been informed about selection of research students;
  - who are fully cognisant with University and statutory policies on equal opportunities;
  - who are aware of the support infrastructure for students with additional needs;
  - a policy of interviewing shortlisted applicants for doctoral degrees, where practical;
  - a policy of taking up two references and, if one or more of these is not available at the time of offer, making the latter conditional upon the receipt of satisfactory references
  - clear selection procedures;
  - making decisions on applications promptly and keeping applicants informed during the admissions process.

### **Letters of Offer**

14. Once it has been decided to accept an applicant, a formal offer has to be made. The letter of offer should be accompanied by: information on fees and any other charges; the broad research topic and the length of study; arrangements for their supervision; and should direct applicants to requirements upon them (including attendance, progress reports, contact, enrolment and registration); expectations in terms of academic and behavioural conduct and performance, and requirements; the availability of research training; and direction to other relevant information, e.g. the institutional policy on Intellectual Property Rights. Applicants should assure themselves that they have sufficient financial support to complete the degree.

### **Induction into the University and the Faculty**

15. The University requires Faculties to provide students with an appropriate induction programme within three months of registration to enable them to acquire an understanding of the academic and social environment within which they will be working.

16. The induction programme should include:

#### **an introduction to the University including:**

- its history and development
- relevant regulations, policies and procedures relating to research degrees

#### **an induction into matters relating to students' relationship with the institution including:**

- the University's academic and behavioural expectations of research students;
- the challenges typically faced by research students;
- institutional facilities available to students including the learning support

- infrastructure;
- institutional provision for student wellbeing and other support arrangements;
- complaints and appeals procedures.

**an induction into matters relating to students' progress supported by the Graduate School and PGR Researcher Development Programme staff including:**

- nominated contacts for support and advice outside the supervisory team;
- the specific facilities and PGR Researcher Development Programme opportunities available to students within the Faculty;
- provision within the University for student wellbeing and other support arrangements.
- information about the opportunities to meet other research students and staff and about opportunities to broaden their knowledge through seminars, conferences, forums etc.

17. The University requires that the Faculty annually review the induction programme.

**Induction into the Programme**

18. The University requires that Academic Units make appropriate arrangements for induction into the student's programme of study. These should actively involve the designated academic supervisor and include inducting students into:

- the academic standards of the programme;
- the intended learning outcomes;
- the curriculum including the PGR Researcher Development training programme and the research element of the individual project;
- methods of teaching and learning;
- assessment;
- regulations governing the research programme, including progression;
- subject-related research codes and ethics;
- programme-related health and safety requirements.

**Learning Agreements**

19. The University requires Academic Units ensure that research students have received, understood, and accepted the expectations of their research programme. The latter should be set out in a formal Learning Agreement, which should be signed by the student and by the supervisor/s on behalf of the University within one month of starting the programme and is completed on the [PGR CoP system](#). A discussion on a student's training needs should also be undertaken at this stage.

20. The student and supervisor should also discuss whether a Confidentiality Agreement is required and if so, this should be completed along with the Learning Agreement.

**The Development of Relevant Knowledge and Skills**

21. The University requires that Faculties should ensure that [researcher development programmes](#) offer students the opportunity to develop a relevant range of knowledge and skills, including skills for employment. It requires that the learning outcomes of such programmes are consistent with the Vitae Researcher Development Framework.

22. The University requires that, for individual research students, Academic Units should make appropriate arrangements:

- to undertake a Training Needs Analysis (TNA) to identify their training needs;
- to identify gaps;
- to provide opportunities for development;
- to record the development of skills;
- to ensure that students are introduced to relevant academic networks;
- to advise them on opportunities to attend and/or participate in seminars, and conferences;
- to encourage them to present papers;
- where appropriate, to encourage them to publish;
- to support career development.

23. The University requires that there should be appropriate access to research training programmes and to individual advice and support for all students, including those who are part-time, have additional , or who are remote from the institution.

### Research Students

24. The University requires that research students should inform their supervisor(s) and the Graduate School about any sponsorship they have received for their research projects and obligations in terms of reporting to sponsors on progress.

25. The University requires that research students should attend induction programmes.

26. The University requires that research students should complete the researcher development programme and any prescribed taught courses, and successfully complete any assessments and/or examinations.

27. The University requires that research students, in conjunction with the supervisory team, undertake a Training Needs Analysis (TNA) in NU Reflect and agree a personal skills development programme. This should take into account their prior learning and experience, their needs in terms of study skills, the needs of their research project, and employment related skills. It requires that research students actively seek to acquire relevant skills. This TNA should be reviewed annually with the supervisory team, and the student should maintain an up-to-date record in NU Reflect.

28. The University requires that research students maintain regular contact with supervisors. As a minimum, full-time students should have **regular contact with one member of their supervisory team at least ten times a year, approximately monthly with no more than an eight-week gap between meetings**, while they are in candidature. At least three of these meetings each year should include the full supervisory team. A formal interaction is a structured meeting whereby student and supervisor(s) engage in a meaningful discussion, e.g., discuss a piece of work and agree on an action plan. The meeting can take place in person\*, or at a distance (for example via Zoom), if a student is away on fieldwork. (*\*In person meeting may be replaced by at a distance meeting as a result of Covid-19 restrictions.*)

In cases where the student is not able to meet these requirements because they are studying

outside the University, e.g., in another organisation as part of a CASE studentship or undertaking fieldwork, the student is required to agree an equivalent schedule of contacts with the supervisory team, using for example E-mail and video-conferencing.

Part-time students and those studying their programme away from an approved campus, should have regular contact with their supervisory team and should discuss and agree the number of formal interactions with their supervisory team as part of their Learning Agreement, ensuring there is no more than a 10-week gap between meetings.

The University requires that research students record and confirm the outcomes of meetings on [NU Reflect](#).

29. In addition, students who are Student Visa holders should continue to record and confirm the outcomes of their regular supervisory meetings, via NU Reflect while under examination through to completion of their studies, as a condition of their visa sponsorship. These meeting records and outcomes may be requested by the Home Office, as part of the University's sponsorship duties.

30. Project proposals must be approved by an impartial Project Approval Panel and Head of Academic Unit, before being submitted for approval by the relevant Dean of Postgraduate Studies. The Project Approval Panel should consist of at least two impartial University members of academic staff (one of which can be an Honorary member of staff) with relevant skills and knowledge. All research students should submit project proposals on the [PGR CoP system](#) within three months of starting their programme, even where a student's project proposal has already been reviewed and approved by external peer review.

31. The University requires that research students take responsibility for listening to, understanding, and accepting feedback from the supervisory team and the Project Approval Panel.

32. The University requires that research students take responsibility for keeping their research project on track so that it is completed within the normal timescale prescribed by their candidature.

33. The University requires that academic problems with the research project should be promptly brought to the attention of the academic supervisor or the supervisory team so that they can provide support. It requires that non-academic problems with a bearing on the progress of the research (e.g., financial, social, domestic, or health problems) should be brought promptly to the attention of the academic supervisor or supervisory team.

34. The University requires that, each year, research students submit a progress report on the research project to an Annual Progress Review Panel until submission of their thesis for examination. In addition, research students may be asked to provide one or more of the following as specified by their Academic Unit;

- submission of a piece of work/lab book;
- give a presentation on their research
- undergo a viva or interview
- evidence of research training

35. The University requires that research students contribute to the research environment

by attending appropriate internal and external events and give normally one formal presentation per year on their work. The University requires that these events are recorded in the PGR CoP system.

36. The University requires that research students be responsible for helping to improve research provision by providing feedback and through representation on relevant committees and decision-making bodies.

37. The University requires that research students abide by this Code of Practice. Where a research student does not abide by this Code of Practice the issue will be addressed under the Unsatisfactory Progress regulations by an Annual Progress Review Panel.

### **Supervisory Arrangements**

38. The University requires that supervision should normally be undertaken by a team consisting of at least two members (normally two members of Newcastle staff) with the appropriate research skills and knowledge, who should be registered on an approved list of supervisors held by the Graduate School and therefore demonstrably research active. The minimum supervision percentage for a member of the supervisory team is 10%. Where for any reason this is not practical, for example where one supervisor is based outside the University, one supervisor from the approved supervisory list is acceptable provided that they also discharge the responsibilities of the academic supervisor outlined below. Where External Advisors form part of the supervisory team, the [Principles for the Appointment of an External Advisor](#) should be consulted.

It is expected that all research students will have two supervisors at the point of their initial registration on their programme. The Graduate School will request this information from Academic Units at registration. Review of the supervisory arrangements will be carried out at Project Approval stage and approved by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies.

39. Staff who have not previously supervised research students are required to undertake appropriate initial training and development, while experienced supervisors are normally expected to undertake continuing professional development relevant to the supervisory role, for example participate in Faculty supervisory updating sessions.

40. There are different models of supervisory team within the University. In joint supervision, the supervisory responsibilities are shared equally between members of the supervisory team. In other styles of supervision, different members of the supervisory team may have different roles. There may be, for example, a lead supervisor and a co-supervisor responsible for a smaller element of the planned research; or a lead supervisor and an advisor responsible for, and able to deal with, general and pastoral responsibilities. Since arrangements may vary, the supervisory team must agree a clear distribution of responsibilities at the outset of the research and update this if arrangements change. In all instances, one supervisor must be nominated as academic supervisor and this person is ultimately responsible for the quality assurance of the research programme.

The academic supervisor:

- must be a member of the staff of the University;
- must have gained a Doctoral degree or have equivalent experience of research;

- be demonstrably research-active;
- should normally have had previous experience of at least one successful supervision, whether as academic or co-supervisor, defined as taking the student all the way through to a research degree award.

In cases where the academic supervisor does not have such experience, the supervisory team must include another member who is a demonstrably active researcher with experience of at least two successful supervisions.

41. The academic supervisor is responsible for:

- being aware of the University's Code of Practice for Research Degrees and other relevant University regulations
- completing a Learning Agreement, Training Needs Analysis, Personal Development Plan and any appropriate risk assessments with the student, and ensuring Project Approval is undertaken
- providing the supervisory input to Annual Progress Review
- determining if an Intellectual Property Rights or a Confidentiality agreement is required
- promoting awareness of ethical and professional requirements for the conduct of research and ensuring that ethical approval is obtained for the research, where appropriate
- being the first point of contact in the supervisory team for the University and ensuring that any relevant request relating to the student e.g., extensions, interruptions is properly processed and recorded providing pastoral support and guidance to the student and acting as a signpost to University central services
- offering support to students in their personal and career development
- arranging together with the Head of Academic Unit a replacement supervisor where one of the supervisory team is absent
- arranging and co-ordinating the final examination

42. In many instances, the academic supervisor will also be lead supervisor who will also be responsible for:

- introducing the student to the Academic Unit , its facilities and procedures
- being the first point of contact in the supervisory team for the student
- agreeing with the student a suitable research field of enquiry
- research project management including arranging a timetable of regular meetings in line with the Code of Practice, requiring the student to keep a record of meetings and agreeing the outcome of meetings with them on NU Reflect
- arranging a realistic timetable for submission and completion in line with any Research Council requirements and the University's maximum candidature
- requesting written work according to an agreed schedule and returning work with constructive criticism in a reasonable time, as agreed at the outset of the research with the student
- chairing formal supervisory meetings

- encouraging students to attend researcher development sessions within the University and where relevant externally, attend and present at conferences and seminars and signposting central services such as careers

43. Where there is a lead supervisor a co-supervisor supervisor should:

- be acquainted with the progress of the student's work and attend formal supervisory meetings at least 3 times per year or additionally as required by the student or lead supervisor
- comment on the student's work where required by the lead supervisor
- provide additional advice where required e.g., supervise specific elements of data collection, data analysis and thesis preparation
- assume the lead supervisor's responsibilities if the original lead supervisor is unable to continue (e.g., through illness or departure)
- act as mentor or arbitrator if the student has any problems that cannot be resolved by the lead supervisor

44. Where supervisors share responsibilities more equally than outlined above (joint supervision) they should collectively agree the allocation of tasks while ensuring that one supervisor acts as academic supervisor. The responsibilities of different supervisors should be recorded on the project approval form and any changes communicated to the Graduate School. Supervisors of research students do not automatically have ownership of the research project undertaken. If an Intellectual Property Rights agreement is required, it is the responsibility of the academic supervisor to determine this.

45. The University requires that Faculties maintain an up-to-date register of staff who are qualified to engage in research supervision from information provided by the Head of Academic Unit and this is maintained by the relevant Graduate School.

46. The University requires that there are regular structured interactions made available to the student to meet with at least one member of the supervisory team at least ten times per year, approximately monthly, with no more than an eight-week gap between meetings. The University requires that at least three of these meetings each year should include the full supervisory team to report, discuss, and agree academic and personal progress (for full-time students). In cases where the student is not able to meet these requirements for any reason, the supervisory team should agree an equivalent schedule of contacts with the student, using for example E-mail and videoconferencing.

Part-time students and those studying their programme away from an approved campus, should have regular contact with their supervisory team and should discuss and agree the number of formal interactions with their supervisor as part of their Learning Agreement, ensuring there is no more than a 10-week gap between meetings.

47. Students who are registered as 'pending submission', 'extended submission' and 'under examination' should expect to receive normal supervision. The University requires that the formal interactions outlined above, between student and supervisory team, are recorded and the outcomes confirmed, in NU Reflect.

48. The University requires that students who are Student Visa holders should continue to

record and confirm the outcomes of their regular supervisory meetings, while under examination through to completion of their studies, as a condition of their visa sponsorship. These meeting records and outcomes may be requested by the Home Office as part of the University's sponsorship duties.

49. The University requires that the maximum period of absence for any member of the supervisory team should not exceed three months, following which appropriate alternative arrangements should be made by the Academic Unit and reported to the Graduate School to ensure continuity of supervision.

50. Where a supervisory team member leaves the University, the Academic Unit should inform the Graduate School Administrator as soon as possible, so that revised supervisory arrangements can be put in place for affected students.

51. In order to ensure that individual supervisors are not overloaded, the University requires appropriate limits on the numbers of research students who may be supervised by an individual supervisor, subject to a normal maximum of six full-time equivalent students. Where Heads of Academic Units allow supervisors to take responsibility for more than six full-time equivalent students, the University requires them to make arrangements to ensure that there will be adequate contact between student and supervisor and that the latter is not overburdened. The Head of Academic Unit is responsible for ensuring that the overall workload of supervisory staff, including secondary supervisions, is at a level that will allow supervisors to deliver the relevant aspects of the Code of Practice for their students.

52. The University requires that the supervisory performance of individual staff is reviewed annually as part of performance development and review.

53. The University requires that all students have access to confidential advice and support from a nominated contact outside the supervisory team. It requires that Faculties should designate such contacts, which should include a Faculty Postgraduate Tutor and others at Academic Unit and/or programme level as appropriate and make this information available to students. The relevant Graduate School Manager is also available to provide advice and guidance to students. (The Faculty Postgraduate Tutor has considerable experience of postgraduate matters and can offer impartial and confidential advice. The Postgraduate Tutor can be consulted in confidence at any stage of a student's research.)

54. It also requires that all supervisors have access to confidential advice and support from a nominated contact, particularly where they have concerns about a student's ability or application to the programme. It requires that Academic Units should designate such a contact, who would normally be the Director of Postgraduate Studies/PGR Co-ordinator, or equivalent, and make this information available to supervisors. The relevant Graduate School Manager is also available to provide advice and guidance to supervisors.

55. Declaration of personal interest: all members of staff are required to declare any personal relationships with any student they are asked to supervise or are already supervising. A supervisor who declares such a personal relationship prior to appointment as supervisor for the student in question shall not be permitted to undertake supervision of that student. A supervisor who declares such a relationship after having been appointed as a member of the supervisory team for the student in question, subject to the permission of

the Dean of Postgraduate Studies, may continue, but shall not be responsible for, or be involved in, any reports affecting the student's progress and/or assessment.

56. The University requires that all research supervisors adhere to this Code of Practice. Where a supervisor does not adhere to this Code of Practice, the Dean of Postgraduate Studies in consultation with the Head of Academic Unit has the power to remove the member of staff from the list of approved research supervisors and make alternative arrangements for the supervision of the student. Where the Dean of Postgraduate Studies and Head of Academic Unit are unable to resolve the supervision, the PVC of the Faculty will be consulted on the matter.

### **Support for Research Students**

57. A thesis demonstrates the ability of a student to undertake original research. It follows that all research outputs (written documents, creative work, etc) produced as part of a PhD (or other doctoral degree) or MPhil must solely be the student's own work. Candidates are examined in the oral examination to demonstrate that the research has been carried out by them; test their ability to defend their thesis and establish whether the candidate has satisfactory knowledge of the wider field in which the research is placed. It is crucial that the research must be an intellectual project that is conducted and owned by the student, and where the theoretical perspective, methodological approach, interpretation of the data generated, and the conclusions drawn are all those of the student.

58. Given these considerations it is important that students are aware of the degree of support that is acceptable when conducting research. This guidance outlines good professional practice during the conduct of research and indicates the support that students can expect from their supervisor. Where a student contravenes this guidance, it may be considered an assessment irregularity: see the [Assessment Irregularities Procedure](#).

### **Supervisory Support**

59. The *Guidelines on Good Practice in Research Supervision* and the *Guidelines for Research Students and Research Supervisors* (Handbook for Research Students and Research Supervisors (part three)) cover in detail the relationship between the student and the supervisory team. Over the course of the research the relationship between the student and their supervisory team will change. In the early stages of the research the supervisory team will induct the student into the research field and acquaint them with the research conducted within it. As the research progresses the student will gradually develop greater independence and by the final stages of the research, they will be able to operate as an independent researcher capable of actively engaging in their field. In general terms, supervisory support can include:

- Assistance with the choice of topic;
- Critical and constructive feedback on the work produced;
- Advice on the sources or literature used;
- Guidance on the methodology or techniques used and the approach to data collection;
- Discussion of evidence and results;
- Reading drafts and commenting on issues of substance.

Supervisors **will not**:

- Undertake the actual research itself;
- Write or significantly redraft papers or chapters;
- Conduct a detailed proof read of the thesis.

### **Changes to Supervisory Teams**

60. Occasionally it may be necessary to make changes to supervisory teams where, for example, the academic focus of the research project has altered, where supervisory responsibilities have changed, or where members of the supervisory team have left the employment of the University. If this is the result of a temporary absence of a member of staff, other members of the supervisory team will continue the supervision with responsibilities being adjusted accordingly. Where the members of the supervisory team are permanently changed, research students should normally be consulted in advance. The University will take all reasonable steps to replace supervisors with suitable alternatives and may extraordinarily include arrangements for supervisors to be from a different academic unit or even from outside the University.

61. However, particularly where it is the student's choice to effect a change in their project or supervisory staff, it may not always be possible to provide suitable alternatives due to the specialist nature of Doctoral or MPhil study. In such a situation, it may not be possible for a student to continue with their programme of study.

62. On rare occasions, supervisory relations may break down. In such circumstances, in the first instance, students should consult with another member of the supervisory team. If it is not possible to resolve the problems in this manner, the student and/or a member of the supervisory team should report difficulties to the Head of Academic Unit. They may refer the matter, if necessary, to the relevant Graduate School or Dean of Postgraduate Studies for advice and mediation. However, students may consult directly with the Graduate School or Dean of Postgraduate Studies in confidence. Where possible, prompt action should be taken to resolve the conflict, and where necessary, a student or a supervisor may request a change of supervisor from the Head of Academic Unit. In making any changes to the supervisory team, due consideration must be given to the need to provide supervisory expertise that is appropriate to the project, in line with the Code of Practice.

63. All supervisory changes must be notified to the relevant Graduate School and be approved by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies.

### **Third Parties**

64. This guidance applies where a third party such as a professional copy editor or a proof-reading company has been employed to provide assistance, or where students receive help from other parties such as fellow students. Where a professional third party or proof-reading software has been employed to assist the student, this should be made clear by the student in the thesis itself and a statement included indicating the nature of the contribution and by whom.

65. A third party may provide:

- Assistance with spelling, punctuation and grammar, and

- Improve the format or layout of the work including editing sentences and paragraphs.
66. Third parties must not make significant adjustments to the work, and this includes:
- Changing, clarifying or developing the argument of the thesis;
  - Adding to the references used;
  - Correcting factual information;
  - Translating significant amounts of work that are integral to the thesis;
  - Significantly reducing the length or substantially altering the organisation of the thesis.

### **The Development and Approval of Research Project Proposals**

67. Research project proposals may be developed prior to the recruitment of a student for purposes of obtaining funding or subsequently by the student following registration or the successful completion of the taught part of the programme.

68. Project proposals must be approved by an impartial Project Approval Panel and Head of Academic Unit, before being submitted for approval by the relevant Dean of Postgraduate Studies.

69. It is the responsibility of any impartial Project Approval panel member to declare if they have a conflict of interest such as a personal or professional relationship with the student, supervisor or alternative Examiner. The Academic Unit should consider any perceived conflict of interests when appointing impartial panel members. The Dean of Postgraduate Studies has the final decision on panel members, if any concerns are raised.

70. When appointing panel members, Academic Units should give consideration to the nature of the project, particularly for interdisciplinary projects, as well as to the composition of the panel from an EDI perspective, where possible.

71. All students should submit project proposals on the [PGR CoP system](#) within three months of starting the programme, even where a student's project proposal has already been reviewed and approved by external peer review.

72. Where the research proposal is developed following registration, the University requires that the supervisory team supports the student in the development of the research project proposal. In particular, the team needs to ensure that the project is achievable within the timescale of the programme, and to confirm that sufficient resources will be available to support it. The University requires that all research project proposals are approved by an impartial Project Approval Panel. It requires that the Project Approval Panel should consist of at least two impartial University members of academic staff (one of which can be an Honorary member of staff) with relevant skills and knowledge, at least one of whom should be demonstrably research-active and at least one of whom should have experience of successful supervision.

73. The University requires the Project Approval Panel to evaluate research proposals against the criteria;

- that the project has clear aims and objectives;
- that the student has (or can acquire) the knowledge, skills, and aptitudes to complete the project successfully;

- that the proposed supervisory team has, or will be able to acquire, the skills, knowledge and aptitudes necessary to supervise the project to a successful conclusion;
- that the project is suitable for the programme of study and for the award;
- that it can be completed within the timescale for the programme;
- that sufficient resources will be available to complete the project;
- whether ethical approval is required;
- in cases where the project involves extended absence from the University on fieldwork or work in collaborating organisations, that appropriate arrangements will be made to support and monitor the progress of the student.

74. In order to evaluate these matters, the panel will need evidence in the forms of:

- a research proposal;
- a research plan;
- a supporting statement by the supervisory team.

75. The Project Approval Panel should consider the evidence and make a written report on the proposals on the PGR CoP system, which will be made available to the student and to the supervisory team once their recommendation has been confirmed by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies. In the event of concerns, the report should indicate the steps necessary to address them. The University requires that Faculties should establish maximum times for the re-submission of proposals, not exceeding three months (six months for part-time students).

76. When the Project Approval Panel is satisfied on the above matters, it then recommends the research project for approval to the Head of Academic Unit and the Dean of Postgraduate Studies. The approval of the research project and the supervisory arrangements will be recorded on the student record by the Graduate School.

77. If the Project Approval Panel does not approve the research project and/or the supervisory arrangements following reassessment of the project approval it will be the Annual Progress Review Panel that will be required to consider the situation in full and make a recommendation regarding a student's continued progression on the programme.

### **Progression and Monitoring**

78. The University requires that supervisory teams should formally monitor the progress of students on research programmes (both full-time and part-time) through annual reports to the Annual Progress Review Panel, on the PGR CoP system. Where appropriate, reports on progress should be made to sponsors and copied to the Graduate School.

79. However, if, at any point during the programme, the supervisory team have concerns about progress, they should inform the student in writing prior to a meeting. At the meeting, the written comments of the team, including any additional work that the supervisors feel are required, should be discussed with the student, and be agreed along with a review date. If progress continues to be unsatisfactory, the student should be informed in writing that this will be referred to the Progress Panel for consideration. The letter should be copied to the Graduate School.

80. The University requires that the progress of the student should be formally reviewed annually by the same (or equivalent) panel that approved the research project and the supervisory arrangements.

81. It is the responsibility of any impartial panel member to declare if they have a conflict of interest such as a personal or professional relationship with the student, supervisor or alternative Examiner. The academic unit should consider any perceived conflict of interests when appointing impartial panel members. The Dean of Postgraduate Studies has the final decision on panel members, if any concerns are raised.

82. When appointing panel members, Academic Units should give consideration to the nature of the project, particularly for interdisciplinary projects, as well to the composition of the panel from an EDI perspective, where possible.

83. Such reviews are completed in the PGR Cop system and involve a progress report completed independently, by both the student and supervisory team and possibly include one or more of the following, as specified by their Academic Unit;

- submission of a piece of work;
- a presentation on their research
- undergo a viva or interview
- evidence of research training

Academic Units will ensure that the progression requirements for full-time and part-time students are clearly specified and made available to students, supervisory team and Annual Progress Review Panel members.

84. Annual Progress Review Panels should consider the evidence, including annual reports by supervisory teams, and determine whether progress indicates that the research project will meet the standards for the award and be completed by the maximum candidature date for the programme.

85. If this criterion is met, the Annual Progress Review Panel should recommend that registration should be continued.

86. If this criterion is not met, the Annual Progress Review Panel should indicate what the student and, where appropriate, the supervisory team must do to put the research project back on track. It should set a date for further review within a period prescribed by the Faculty, normally within two months (four months for part-time students).

87. Annual Progress Review Panels should complete a report, which will be approved by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies, which will then be shared with the research student and the supervisory team, on the PGR Cop system. In the event of the Annual Progress Review Panel being unable to make a recommendation to progress, the student and the supervisory team should determine an action plan to ensure that the research project will meet the standards of the award by the date set for further review.

88. If necessary, the Annual Progress Review Panel should re-convene on the date set and consider whether progress has been such that the research project will meet the standards for the award. Where the evidence has demonstrated this, the Annual Progress Review Panel should recommend continuation.

89. Where the evidence does not demonstrate that the research project will meet the standards for the award, the Annual Progress Review Panel's recommendations will depend upon its judgement of the reasons in terms of the potential of the student to achieve the standards and the adequacy and appropriateness of supervisory arrangements. Any reassessment should be recorded in the PGR Cop system.

90. Where the Annual Progress Review Panel is not satisfied that supervisory arrangements are adequate and appropriate but considers that the student would otherwise be able to achieve the standards of the award, it may seek the approval of the Head of Academic Unit to make a recommendation to the Dean of Postgraduate Studies for the replacement of all or part of the supervisory team.

91. Where it is satisfied that supervisory arrangements are adequate and appropriate but that the student is unlikely to be able to achieve the standards for the award, the Annual Progress Review Panel may recommend that the student be registered for a lower degree where the student is likely to be able to achieve the standards or, if a student cannot meet the standards for those awards, that their registration be terminated.

92. Although the final decision with respect to any recommendation made by the Academic Unit is taken by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies, an Academic Unit may give provisional feedback to the students after the Annual Progress Panel has met.

### **Appointment of Examiners**

93. The regulations of the University require that all research degrees are examined by two examiners, at least one of whom must be external. For staff candidates, the examination shall normally be conducted by two External Examiners for each candidate although for junior members of staff, at the discretion of the Dean of Postgraduate Studies, one External and one Internal Examiner may be appointed.

94. All Examiners should be willing to complete the process of examination normally within ten weeks of submission of the thesis.

95. In nominating Examiners, Heads of Academic Unit should, in consultation with supervisors, take account of points 96 to 100.

### **External Examiners**

96. External Examiners are a recognised authority in their field and provide an important external oversight of the examination process. It is recommended that External Examiners should normally be appointed from research-intensive universities, to ensure standards and consistency across all Faculties.

External Examiners MUST:

- Have significant experience and knowledge of research in the subject area within which the candidate is working.
- Be independent and have no obvious conflict of interest.
- Have a research degree or equivalent academic or professional experience.
- Be research active and will normally have published in recognised outlets (or other equivalent research activity) in the discipline in the last two years. (The information provided to support the appointment should clearly detail this.)

- Have a clear understanding of the examination process normally based on experience of examining research degrees at other institutions.

External Examiners MUST NOT:

- Be a former member of Newcastle University or a former postgraduate unless more than five years have elapsed since that person left the University.
- Be appointed on a regular basis such that their familiarity with the Academic Unit might influence their judgment.
- Have a close relationship with the postgraduate student or supervisory team e.g., have published with or worked directly with them to a significant degree within the last five years.
- Be an honorary member of Newcastle University.
- Normally be a retired member of staff from another University unless they demonstrably meet all the criteria outlined above.

### **Internal Examiners**

97. The Internal Examiner is normally responsible for ensuring that the University's examination practices are followed and that the Joint Report Form is forwarded to the Graduate School Administrator.

To be eligible, Internal Examiners MUST:

- Have a contract of employment at Newcastle University and be registered on the approved list of supervisors held by the Graduate School.
- Have expertise in the broad field of the thesis under examination.
- Be familiar with the University procedures for the examination of research degrees (where examiners have not conducted an examination at Newcastle they must be briefed by the Academic Unit and an Independent Chair must be appointed – see below).

Internal Examiners MUST NOT:

- Have had any direct involvement with the research project under examination.
- Be members of the supervisory team that have supported the work of the student.
- Be a postgraduate student.
- Be a visiting member of Newcastle University.

### **An Independent Chair**

98. An Independent Chair makes sure the University's procedures with regard to the examination of research degrees are followed. They take no part in the assessment process but ensure that the examination process is conducted fairly and equitably. Graduate Schools maintain a list of approved Independent Chairs who can be appointed by Deans of Postgraduate Study, when required.

99. The Independent Chair will be present for the duration of the oral examination, normally also including the pre-meeting and post oral discussions between examiners. An Independent Chair will not be required to take notes of the meeting for the External Examiners but will be required to provide a summary report on proceedings to the Graduate School following the oral examination.

An Independent Chair MUST be appointed in the following circumstances:

- Where two External Examiners are appointed.
- Where the Internal Examiner has no previous experience of examining a research degree.

An Independent Chair MAY be appointed in the following circumstances:

- Where the Examiners of the thesis require the assistance of an independent authority to conduct the examination process.
- Where the Internal examiner has no previous experience of examining research degrees at Newcastle University.
- When the Dean of Postgraduate Studies deems an independent authority is needed to ensure the examination process is conducted fairly.
- Where the student has requested this on medical/personal/cultural grounds.

An Independent Chair shall:

- Normally be an academic member of staff at the University, normally at Senior Lecturer / Reader level or above.
- Be familiar with Newcastle University examination processes for research degrees.
- Have substantial experience of postgraduate research and examination.

An Independent Chair MUST NOT:

- Be a member of the supervisory team or have played any part in the research under examination.
- Normally be from the student and/or supervisor's subject area.

### **Responsibilities and Conflicts of Interest**

100. It is the responsibility of the proposed External or Internal Examiners to declare if they have a conflict of interest such as a personal or professional relationship with the student, supervisor or alternative Examiner. Once the Examiners have been appointed it is the responsibility of the supervisory team to communicate to the Graduate School any health or personal circumstances that may affect the conduct of the oral examination. The supervisors have no further involvement in the examination process once the examiners have been appointed other than to ensure that the administrative arrangements for the oral examination are in place.

101. It is the role of the Dean of Postgraduate Studies to comment critically on the proposed Examiners and if there is a perceived conflict of interests, the Dean of Postgraduate Studies has the final decision in the appointment of Examiners.

### **Personal Extenuating Circumstances**

102. The University has established procedures for dealing with personal extenuating circumstances affecting research students throughout the duration of their studies. A research student can apply for an interruption of studies, a change of candidature or an extension to their submission deadline, if personal circumstances are impacting on their studies.

103. Following submission of a thesis, if a candidate is aware of any circumstances that may stop them from attending the oral examination, these should be brought to the attention of their Supervisor and the Graduate School, to determine if it is necessary to delay the oral

examination.

104. A candidate should also contact their Supervisor and the Graduate School, if there are personal circumstances they believe could impact on their performance at the oral examination. This information will then be provided to the examiners, in advance of the oral examination, to determine if any reasonable adjustments are required.

105. Irrespective of personal circumstances, examiners will be expected to assess the candidate against the assessment criteria for the relevant research degree. However, examiners might wish to take personal circumstances into account when considering the recommendations open to them.

106. By attending an oral examination, a candidate is declaring that they are fit to attend the examination, and as such, it is unlikely that a student would be able to submit a later claim that their performance was affected by personal circumstances.

### **Examination**

107. The University requires that Heads of Academic Units should be responsible for the nomination of examiners for research degrees, in accordance with the criteria for appointment set out above. Heads of Academic Units should consult the supervisory team about possible nominees, and the supervisory team should offer the student the chance to comment.

108. Nominations should be made on the PGR CoP system to the Dean of Postgraduate Studies who should check that the examiners meet the requirements set out above and, if so, approve them on behalf of Senate.

109. Once nominations have been approved, the Graduate School will send a letter of appointment along with relevant information including the University's Handbook for Examiners of Research Degrees with institutional assessment criteria for the award.

110. Where an Independent Chair is required, the Graduate School will consult the list of approved Independent Chairs and provide details of the Independent Chair to the examiners, supervisors and candidate.

111. The supervisory team should agree in writing the date, time and place with the examiners, candidate and where appropriate the Independent Chair and should then notify the Graduate School. Candidates should be asked whether or not they wish to have a member of their supervisory team present in the oral examination as a non-contributing observer (unless asked to contribute by the Chair). If not present, the supervisory team should be available for consultation. When agreeing the date for the oral examination, the supervisory team should ensure that there is sufficient time to allow for the thesis to be sent to and fully considered by the examiners.

112. Under no circumstances should the arrangements for the oral examination be delegated to the candidate.

113. There should normally be no discussion about the oral examination, between the supervisory team and the examiners in advance of the oral examination.

114. There should also normally be no discussion about the oral examination between the

candidate and the examiners prior to the oral examination. Following the oral examination, there should continue to be no direct contact between the candidate and the examiners. If the candidate requires clarification on points raised by the examiners, this clarification should be sought via the supervisory team.

115. The University requires the supervisory team to advise the candidate on preparation for the oral examination and where practical to offer at least one practice session.

116. The University requires that, prior to the oral examination, examiners make preliminary written independent reports on the thesis, which should be sent to the Graduate School.

117. The University requires that Examiners should not consult with each other before both independent preliminary reports have been submitted to the Graduate School, normally two weeks in advance of the oral examination.

118. The University requires that oral examinations should be chaired by the External Examiner and conducted in accordance with the procedures set out in the Handbook for Examiners of Research Degrees. In an oral examination where an Independent Chair is appointed, it will be the Independent Chair who will chair the oral examination.

119. Following the oral examination the University requires that examiners write a joint report (except in cases where they disagree when they should write separate reports) and make an appropriate recommendation in respect of the award. Where the recommendation is re-submission, the report should include a detailed/comprehensive statement of the work to be done to achieve the award within the period allowed under the University's regulations.

120. As well as reporting on the thesis and the candidate, examiners should be requested to provide comments on the broader issues of the research training skills and the research environment.

121. The examiners' joint report should be sent to the Graduate School for approval by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies. The Graduate School will send copies of the final report, along with the statement of any required corrections/revisions, to the student, supervisory team and the Head of Academic Unit and Director of Postgraduate Studies.

### **Criteria for the Doctorate**

122. Doctoral degrees at Newcastle University meet in full the doctoral qualification descriptor contained in [The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies](#), and are aligned with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area. Doctoral degrees are awarded to candidates who demonstrate:

- The ability to create and interpret new knowledge through original research and advanced scholarship;
- A systematic understanding of an existing body of knowledge that is at the forefront of an academic field;
- The ability to explore critically, evaluate and test their ideas, and those of others, and to relate them to a wider body of knowledge;
- A good understanding of the research techniques, methods or approaches adopted and applied in a field of enquiry;

- The ability to conceive and implement a project which demonstrates an understanding of how to conduct research at the forefront of a field;
- An ability to produce research material worthy of publication, performance or exhibition.

### Criteria for the MPhil Programme

123. The Degree of Master of Philosophy (MPhil) is awarded to candidates displaying convincing evidence of the capacity to pursue research and scholarship and represent original work. On successful completion of an MPhil candidates will have attained Level 7, as defined in [The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies](#).

For the award of an MPhil degree the University requires:

- A systematic understanding of knowledge that is informed by work at the forefront of an academic field;
- An ability to evaluate and critically appraise current research and advanced scholarship, and some evidence of originality in the application of this work;
- An understanding and critical appreciation of the research techniques, methods or approaches adopted and applied in a field of enquiry;
- An ability to conceive and implement a research project, which demonstrates an understanding of how to conduct research in a field.

124. Normally an MPhil thesis will be more focused or limited in scope than a doctoral degree. A doctoral degree will demonstrate greater depth of critical enquiry than the MPhil. Relative to the doctoral degree, the MPhil will have less emphasis on original work and it need not be worthy of publication, performance or exhibition.

### All Research Degrees

125. For all research degrees, the University requires that work presented for examination should be:

126. *Authentic*: The submission should be the candidate's own work and not be plagiarised from the work of others, published or unpublished, in the public domain or not. All sources used should be appropriately acknowledged using a recognised form of referencing.

127. *Scholarly*: The thesis should conform to the normal canons of scholarship, studying a topic in-depth, and displaying critical discrimination and a sense of proportion in evaluating evidence and the opinion of others. In written work sources should be cited accurately, consistently, and correctly in the text and in the bibliography.

128. *Professional*: The thesis should demonstrate the author has acquired the skills of a professional researcher capable of conducting research in accordance with the ethical practices of their field, and that they possess a good understanding of their role in the wider research process. The author should also demonstrate the ability to exercise personal responsibility and initiative in complex and unpredictable professional research environments.

129. *Well-structured, written, and presented*: The thesis should demonstrate skill in writing and presenting research similar to scholarly work in their field. A written thesis should be

clearly structured and orderly in arrangement, and well-written and presented. Similarly, any composition, exhibition, artefact(s) or other products of practice arising from the research should be arranged and presented in an orderly and coherent way.

### **Covid-19 Impact Statement**

130. Where a research student has changed their thesis from what was originally intended due to Covid-19, they may include a Covid-19 Impact Statement to explain to their Examiners the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on their research project. Examiners will be expected to assess the candidate against the assessment criteria for the relevant research degree. However, examiners should take the circumstances as detailed in a Covid-19 Impact Statement into account when considering the recommendations open to them. Further information is available in the [Covid-19 Impact Statement Guidance](#).

### **Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework**

131. All research programmes are reviewed under the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework, which provides an opportunity to reflect on current practice in relation to Research Degree Programmes and provides a forum to consider the enhancement of the student experience through the sharing of good practice and feedback from external sources and students.

132. The process is carried out in two ways; firstly, an Annual Review of Research Degree Programmes is undertaken, which provides Academic Units with a formal opportunity to monitor the effectiveness of research degree provision focussing on aspects of this Code of Practice.

133. The Annual Review reports are supplemented by a Review Visit; within each Faculty two visits to Academic Units take place per year. The review visits are undertaken by a small panel who explore in more detail the evidence provided by the annual review process to evaluate its efficacy, ask questions of the Academic Unit under review and meet students.

134. The results of the Review and the Review Visits are reported annually by Faculty Postgraduate Research Committees to the Postgraduate Research Sub-Committee of the University Education Committee.

135. The [Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework](#) details the full policy and process and is applicable to all elements of research programmes, including any taught components.

### **Feedback Mechanisms**

136. The University requires that confidential mechanisms are established for research students to feedback on the quality of their learning experiences. Such mechanisms should include: questionnaires focused on recruitment, admission and induction procedures; questionnaire evaluations of the researcher development programme; survey questionnaires, focus groups or interviews covering the totality of the learning experience.

137. Any feedback received from other stakeholders, including supervisory teams, review panels, examiners, funders, collaborative organisations, employers and alumni should also be reviewed.

138. Feedback from these should be considered by Faculty Postgraduate Research Committees and, where appropriate, acted upon.

### **Complaints and Resolution**

139. The University has established procedures for complaints about a service, member of staff, or another student. A complaint may be made by any student, including a research student. Details are set out in the [Complaints and Resolution Procedure](#).

140. The University provides a clear three-stage procedure for students to complain about the level of service or treatment which may have fallen short of what might reasonably be expected. At Level 1 (informal stage for resolution), complainants are expected to make every effort to resolve informally a problem with the individual(s) concerned or to seek help/advice in writing from the complainant's tutor/supervisor/Head of School, or appropriate Head of Service.

141. Only when the steps taken under Level 1 of the procedure have failed, or when the complainant considers that their complaint has not been resolved may Level 2 of the procedure be invoked by submission of the Complaints Form, together with full details of the complaint and any supporting evidence.

142. Level 3 is the formal review of the Level 2 outcome, where the complainant requests a review of the outcome of their complaint at the Level 2 stage.

### **Academic Appeals and Query**

143. The University has established procedures for appeal against a recommendation by a progression panel and examiners of research degrees. Details are set out in the [Academic Appeals and Query](#) procedure.

144. The University provides a clear three-stage procedure for students making Academic Queries and Appeals requesting reconsideration of Board of Examiners/ Personal Extenuating Circumstances (PEC) and/or Degree Programme Director (DPD)/ Progress Decisions.

145. Level 1 is the informal stage for querying academic decisions. Appellants are expected to make every effort to raise their assessment/progress query, in writing, with the School/Faculty directly concerned in the first instance. Graduate School Manager are the nominated contact for Research Degree programmes/students at Level 1.

146. Only when the steps taken under Level 1 of the procedure have failed, or when the Appellant considers that their query has not been resolved, may Level 2 of the Academic Queries & Appeals Procedure be invoked by submission of the Academic Appeal Form together with full details of the formal appeal and any supporting evidence.

147. Level 3 is the formal review of the Level 2 outcome, where the Appellant requests a review of the outcome of their academic appeal at the Level 2 stage.

## **ADDENDUM TO THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR RESEARCH MASTERS' DEGREE PROGRAMMES**

### **Introduction**

- i. The purpose of this Addendum to the Code of Practice is to set out the University's standards for its research masters' programmes. This refers in particular to MLitt, MRes, as well as some MMus and LLM programmes
- ii. This addendum to the Code of Practice is supplementary to aid staff in interpretation for the University's research masters' programmes and should be read in conjunction with the full Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes.

### **Selection of Research Students**

- iii. The University requires that there should be rigorous selection policies and procedures for Postgraduate Admissions and, where appropriate, Academic Unit or subject levels.
- iv. The University requires that selection procedures should be rigorous and involve the following;
  - involve at least the Degree Programme Director or PGR Director in the selection process, who will act on behalf of the Head of Academic Unit to approve the offer of a place.
  - interviewing applicants, where it is deemed appropriate and possible.
  - taking up two references and, if one or more of these is not available at the time of offer, making the latter conditional upon the receipt of satisfactory references.

### **Learning Agreements**

- v. Students need to have received, understood, and accepted the expectations of their research programme. This should be set out in a formal Learning Agreement, which should be signed by the student and by the Supervisor or Degree Programme Director on behalf of the University. This will be completed on the [PGR CoP system](#).

### **The Development of Relevant Knowledge and Skills**

- vi. The University requires the research programme should offer students the opportunity to develop a relevant range of research knowledge and skills, appropriate to the programme.

### **Research Students**

- vii. It is required that research students maintain regular attendance on the programme. During the research project/dissertation stage full-time students should undertake regular structured interaction and meet with their allocated supervisor at least monthly. The University requires that research students should record and confirm the outcomes of meetings, normally on [NU Reflect](#).

### **Supervisory Arrangements**

- viii. The University requires that individual supervisors are appointed for the research project/dissertation element of the programme. This should normally be undertaken by a member of academic staff, who should be demonstrably research active and on the approved research supervisors' list for the Academic Unit or faculty. Students should always have a second named person acting as advisor, either an additional disciplinary expert or the

Degree Programme Director or School Director of Postgraduate Studies.

### **The Development and Approval of Research Project Proposals**

ix. Research project/ dissertation proposals should be developed prior to the commencement of the research element of the programme and approved by the Degree Programme Director or PGR Director in conjunction with the research supervisor.

x. The University requires the Degree Programme Director to evaluate research proposals against the criteria;

- that the project has clear aims and objectives;
- that the student has (or can acquire) the knowledge, skills, and aptitudes to complete the project successfully;
- that the proposed supervisor has, or will be able to acquire, the skills, knowledge and aptitudes necessary to supervise the project to a successful conclusion;
- that the project is suitable for the programme of study and for the award;
- that it can be completed within the timescale for the programme;
- that sufficient resources will be available to complete the project.

### **Progression and Monitoring**

xi. The University requires that the Degree Programme Director or PGR Director and supervisor should formally monitor the progress of students on research masters' programmes. Formal monitoring will include review of progress following any taught components of the programme.

xii. However, if, at any point during the course of the programme, the Degree Programme Director, PGR Director or supervisor has concerns about progress, they should inform the student in writing prior to a meeting. At the meeting, the written comments of the team should be discussed with the student, and a plan of action should be agreed along with a review date. If progress continues to be unsatisfactory, the student should be informed in writing of the reasons and of the possible consequences in terms of being unable to progress, suspension, or termination of registration. The letter should be copied to the Graduate.

xiii. The University requires that the progress of the student should be formally reviewed after the taught element of the programme.

### **Examination**

xiv. The regulations of the University require that all research degree projects/ dissertations are examined by two examiners, one internal and one external. For staff candidates, the examination shall normally be conducted by two external examiners for each candidate although for junior members of staff, at the discretion of the Dean of Postgraduate Studies, one external and one internal may be appointed.

xv. The University requires that examiners should be demonstrably research-active in relevant fields. Examiners should be independent of the project and otherwise meet the criteria set out in the criteria for appointment of examiners set out for research degrees above. Supervisors are explicitly excluded from acting as examiners for the research project/ dissertation.

- xvi. The University requires that the Head of School or Degree Programme Director should be responsible for the nomination of examiners for the research project/dissertation.
- xvii. Nominations of examiners should be made on the PGR Cop system, to the relevant Dean of Postgraduate Studies, who should check that the examiners meet the requirements set out above and, if so, approve them on behalf of Senate.
- xviii. Once nominations have been approved, examiners should be sent a letter of appointment and relevant information including assessment criteria for the award and profile of marks from the modules studied prior to the research project/dissertation.
- xix. Following assessment of the research project/dissertation the examiners should write separate reports and make an appropriate recommendation in respect of the award. Where the recommendation is re-submission, the report should include a statement of the work to be done to achieve the award within the period allowed under the University's regulations.
- xx. If the examiners determine that an oral examination is required, this should be chaired by an external examiner and conducted in accordance with the procedures set out in the Handbook for Examiners of Research Degrees.