Newcastle University

Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes

(With Addendum for Research Masters' Degree Programmes)

25/26 Academic Year

Effective from 1 September 2025.

Please note that subsequent changes to this Code of Practice may be necessary to ensure that the requirements of accrediting bodies or contemporary practices are met, or as a response to circumstances beyond the reasonable control of the University.

A note on terminology

- This document uses the term 'Academic Unit' as an overarching term for School and Institute.
- Where reference is made throughout this document to any named University role, this also includes their nominee.

1. Purpose

This Code of Practice sets out the University's standards for its research programmes. It should be used by all students enrolled on PhD, MPhil and MD programmes of study, and for the thesis element of any MPhil or Doctoral programme of study, including PhDs and Professional Doctorates.

Please see the addendum at the end of this document for specific advice relating to research masters programmes.

All research students are expected to follow this code of practice. If you do not follow this Code of Practice, you may be referred to an Annual Progress Review Panel under the failure to make academic progress regulations.

2. The Research Environment

Newcastle University is a leading research-intensive university, with a distinguished record of advancing knowledge and understanding through the pursuit of research and scholarship.

The University comprises three faculties and offers a range of research programmes, each designed to enable you to undertake research training and make your own unique contribution to knowledge and understanding in your subject area.

The University will only offer research programmes where it is confident that students can be trained and supported within a suitable research environment. This means that Academic Units must:

- Demonstrate significant international research excellence through the Research Excellence Framework (REF);
- Have a critical mass of University academics to act as suitable supervisors;
- Satisfy the requirements of the University Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework, including acceptable submission and completion rates that meet the requirements for the Research Council(s) in that subject area;
- Provide you with appropriate facilities, as set out below.

Where any of the above criteria are not met, the University may, on the advice of a 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 other conditions set out above have been or will be met.

2.1. Working Space

You can expect:

- Working space in an appropriate shared office, open-plan office or hot-desk accommodation, with adequate access, heating, ventilation and security arrangements;

- Reasonable space for the secure storage of essential books, consumables, personal belongings and research data;
- Access to appropriate bench/studio space and associated facilities (where relevant, see below).

If you are working on a multi-disciplinary project across more than one Academic Unit, you can expect a discussion at the beginning of your programme regarding appropriate working arrangements to enable you to identify which of your Academic Units will serve as your primary and secondary sites. The secondary site should allocate you appropriate facilities where needed.

If there is disruption to your working space (for example, as a consequence of maintenance work), your Academic Unit will advise you of any potential impact on your study and you can expect your Academic Unit to take reasonable steps to minimise the disruption to you.

2.2. Access to Laboratory/Studio/Workshop Space (where relevant)

If your research project is laboratory-/workshop-/studio-based, you can expect to be provided with appropriate facilities to conduct your research project. This includes bench space, access to equipment and facilities, and any consumables agreed by your project approval panel to be necessary and within budget for your project.

Equipment approved for your research project will be provided in a timely manner and maintained in good working order throughout your project.

You 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.

2.3. Consumables

You 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 your supervisor in connection with your research;
- Where you are using a computer workstation, 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 your research, which may be logged.

2.4. IT Equipment

You can expect access to a networked desktop PC or laptop, printer and scanner (if required). If you require access to a more powerful PC for research purposes (for example, if you handle large or complex datasets, or if you require specialist research software), this should be provided to you.

2.5. IT Systems

You will have access to the University's systems supporting PGR studies, e.g. NU Reflect (which you can use to record your personal and professional development, as well as supervisory meetings) and the PGR CoP System (which is used to administer the formal processes and milestones associated with research degree programmes) and you are required to maintain and record formal supervisions, training, project approval and annual progress using these systems, Guidance will be provided when you register.

2.6. Funding for Conference Attendance and Travel

You should have a reasonable opportunity to attend and/or participate in research conferences, with the agreement of your supervisor and subject to available funding. You should contact your Academic Unit in the first instance for further information on available funding. A record of conference attendance should be kept on your NU Reflect.

2.7.   Social Facilities

You can expect to have access to common room facilities in order to facilitate social interactions. In some cases, and where agreed by your Academic Unit, social facilities may be combined with staff common rooms.

3.   Pre-Entry Information

In order to enable potential applicants to make an informed choice, the University will provide clear, accurate and comprehensive pre-entry information about the relevant programme, including:

- Entry requirements;
- The admissions process;
- Information about available scholarships;
- Specific information for disabled applicants;
- Appropriate contact information for any queries you may have.
- Research and training opportunities;
- Submission and completion times;
- Your rights and responsibilities as a research student (including financial responsibilities);

3.1.   Entry Standards and Application

The minimum standard for admission to a research programme is usually an Upper Second-Class Honours degree (2:1) in a relevant subject, or a relevant Master's degree. Any additional subject-specific qualification requirements will be made clear to you, either via the University prospectus or from your prospective Academic Unit.

If your first language is not English, you will need to provide evidence of your competence in English language alongside your application.

You are required to provide the names of two recent academic referees (or, where this is not possible, one academic referee and a professional employer) who can comment knowledgeably upon your suitability for research in your specified field.

3.2.   Selection of Research students

In order to assist the match between you, your research project, supervisory team and institution, there are rigorous selection policies and procedures, which includes a Selection Panel of at least two experienced and research-active academics, one of whom will normally form part of the supervisory team will act on behalf of the Head of Academic Unit to approve the offer of a place .

Shortlisted applicants for Doctoral degree programmes will normally be invited to interview prior to being offered a place on any Doctoral programme.

3.3.   Offer Letters

If you are accepted onto a research degree programme, you will receive a formal offer, which will normally be conditional on the receipt of two academic references.

Alongside your letter of offer, you can also expect to receive:
- Information on tuition fees and any other charges;
- The broad research topic and the length of study;
- Arrangements for supervision;
- Information regarding any requirements you must fulfil (including attendance, progress reports, contact, enrolment and registration);
- An outline of expectations in terms of academic and behavioural conduct and performance requirements;
- Information on the availability of research training;
- Any other relevant information, e.g. the institutional policy on Intellectual Property Rights.

Applicants should assure themselves that they have sufficient financial support to fund their studies through to completion of the degree.

4.   Induction into the University and Faculty

Your Faculty will provide you with an appropriate induction programme within three months of registration to enable you to acquire an understanding of the University environment.

This will normally include an introduction to:

- The University, its history and its current policies and procedures;
- Matters relating to your relationship to the University, including academic and behavioural expectations, your rights and responsibilities as a student, facilities and provisions available to you, and how to raise complaints and appeals;
- Matters relating to your academic progress, such as named support contacts, development and networking opportunities.

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

5.   Induction into your Programme

Your Academic Unit will provide you with an appropriate induction to your programme of study. This will usually be mandatory, be led by your academic supervisor and will include an introduction to:

- The academic standards of your programme and your intended learning outcomes;
- The curriculum, including the PGR Researcher Development training programme;
- The research element of your individual project;
- The methods of teaching, learning and assessment;
- Any relevant policies or regulations governing your programme (including progression requirements);
- Any subject-related information you need to be aware of, such as research codes and ethical approval processes;
- Any programme-related health and safety requirements.

6.   Reasonable Adjustments and Student Support Plans

6.1   Reasonable Adjustments

These are practical changes made to provide equitable access to services offered to disabled students, including pre-entry admission processes, post-entry teaching, learning and assessment. This means considering how a disabled student may be placed at a disadvantage when accessing educational services offered or provided and how this disadvantage, arising because of a disability, can be substantially reduced or removed through the provision of a reasonable adjustment. This is generally referred to as identifying barriers to study. Disabled students experiencing the same barrier may require different adjustments.

6.2   Student Support Plan (SSP)

Is a document that outlines information about a disabled student and specifies the adjustments required to ensure their access to and participation in teaching, learning, and assessment. It includes a summary of the student's disability. SSPs are intended to be working documents that can be reviewed and updated as needed to accommodate changes in the student's circumstances or to address any barriers to study that persist despite current adjustments.

Where a Doctoral/MPhil student has an SSP, it should include information on the reasonable adjustments required during the student lifecycle such as:

- Registration/Induction
- Project approval
- Supervision arrangements

- Supervisor feedback
- Work/study spaces
- Conference attendance
- Fieldwork
- Annual Progress Review
- Thesis Submission
- Examination preparation, including the oral examination

All colleagues receiving an SSP for a PGR student must ensure that the recommended adjustments are both clear and feasible to implement. Any concerns regarding the practicality of implementing the adjustments should be referred to the Disability Service.

7. Learning Agreements

Within one month of starting your programme, your Supervisor/s will work with you to complete a formal Learning Agreement (on the PGR CoP system) which sets out the expectations of your research programme, including:

- Responsibilities for arranging meetings and other formal contact with your supervisory team;
- How often you can expect to meet with your supervisory team;
- Whether a confidentiality agreement is required;
- Working arrangements, including any expectations around working practices, working on campus, flexible working, etc.
- Any training needs you may have;
- Any obligations you have to report your academic progress to external sponsors (where applicable).

Both you and your supervisor(s) will need to sign the Learning Agreement and it will be recorded on your formal student record.

8. Training Needs Analysis

All research students are expected to have appropriate access to research training programmes, regardless of location of study, your candidature (full-time, part-time or combined), or whether you have any additional learning needs.

Your supervisor(s) will work with you to undertake a Training Needs Analysis at the start of your programme and agree a personal skills development programme that is consistent with the Vitae Researcher Development Framework. They will help you to identify gaps in your training, record any training undertaken, and help you to access the Faculty Researcher Development Programmes.

As part of the Training Needs Analysis, you are expected to actively seek to acquire relevant skills for your programme. In addition, your supervisory team will make the appropriate arrangements to:

- Provide you with opportunities for career development;
- Ensure that you are introduced to relevant academic networks;
- Advise you of opportunities to attend and/or participate in conferences and seminars;
- Support you to present your research at conferences and in research publications.

You should review your Training Needs Analysis with your supervisory team on an annual basis and keep a record of any training undertaken in NU Reflect.

9. Research Environment

You are expected to contribute to the research environment and for helping to improve this by:

- Attending appropriate internal and external events, such as conferences and seminars;

- Giving at least one formal presentation per year on your work;
- Providing appropriate feedback to the University through representation on relevant committees and decision-making bodies.

You should always record your contribution to formal research events on NU Reflect.

10.   Research Supervision

Over the course of your research project, the relationship between you and your supervisory team will evolve and, by the final stages, you will be able to operate as an independent researcher capable of actively contributing to your field.

In general terms, research supervision can include:

- Assistance with your choice of topic;
- Advice on suitable sources or literature to consult;
- Guidance on the research methodology or approach to data collection;
- Critical and constructive feedback on work produced, including by reading thesis/chapter drafts and commenting on issues of substance;
- Discussion of evidence and results.

Supervisors will **not**:

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

Please see: (*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*), which cover in detail the relationship between the student and the supervisory team and outline good professional practice.

10.1. Supervisory Team

The Graduate School will request information from your Academic Unit regarding your supervisory team following initial registration on your programme. Your supervisory team will be reviewed and confirmed by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies at the Project Approval stage.

The University requires that supervision should normally be undertaken by a team consisting of at least two members (normally two members of Newcastle University staff) with the appropriate research skills and knowledge, Where this is not practical, it may be possible to have one supervisor from Newcastle University alongside external advisors, subject to the approval of the Dean of Postgraduate Studies. In these instances, your Newcastle University supervisor will need to undertake all of the core supervisory activities, as listed in 10.2. below.

The minimum supervision percentage for a member of the supervisory team is 10%.

The Doctoral College and Graduate Schools maintain a list of colleagues who are approved to act as PGR Supervisors on the Doctoral College Fellows list. Information on becoming a fellow of the Doctoral College is available here.

All University employees with research supervision responsibilities are required to engage with the PGR Supervisory Development programme (supported by the Doctoral College), which provides workshops relevant to the supervisory role. There are mandatory workshop requirements for both new supervisors and existing supervisors. The supervisory performance of individual staff is reviewed annually as part of their performance development and review.

If you have any external advisors on your supervisory team (for example, Emeritus academic members of staff or supervisors based outside in other institutions), these should be in addition to your core supervisory team. You may wish to consult the Principles for the Appointment of an External Advisor and Joint Supervision

10.2. Supervisor Responsibilities

Supervision arrangements may vary according to the make-up of your supervisory team. You may have one lead supervisor and other co-supervisors, or you may have joint supervisors. Whatever the make-up of your supervisory team, your supervisors must agree a clear distribution of the responsibilities outlined below at the outset of the research. They must collectively agree the allocation of tasks and ensure that one supervisor acts as your Academic Supervisor. The agreed responsibilities of your supervisors should be recorded on your project approval form and communicated clearly to you. These formal arrangements should be updated and communicated both to you and the Graduate School if there are any changes in circumstances which may affect your supervision.

It is important to note that your supervisory team **does not** automatically have intellectual property ownership of your research project. If an Intellectual Property Rights agreement is required, it is the responsibility of your academic supervisor to determine this.

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 Doctoral College Fellows list of approved research supervisors and make alternative arrangements for your supervision. 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.

10.3   The Academic Supervisor

You will have one nominated Academic Supervisor who oversees your research programme whowill:

- Be an employee of Newcastle University;
- Have gained a doctoral degree (or have equivalent experience of research);
- Be demonstrably research-active;
- Normally have experience of supervising a successful research degree, whether as academic supervisor or co-supervisor. A 'successful research degree' is a degree where a student has been awarded their research degree.

If your Academic Supervisor does not meet the above requirements, your supervisory team will need to include another member who is demonstrably research-active and has experience of supervising at least **two** successful research degrees to completion.

Your Academic Supervisor is your first point of contact in the supervisory team for any University-related issues. Their role is to make sure that you are aware of your responsibilities throughout your research project, as well as to support you in your career development. This includes:

- Making sure you are aware of all University policies, procedures, regulations and codes of practice which apply to you;
- Working with you to complete a Learning Agreement, Training Needs Analysis, Personal Development Plan and appropriate Risk Assessments (where relevant);
- Ensuring that you obtain the appropriate project approval and ethical approval for your research project;
- Determining whether you need to obtain Intellectual Property Rights or a Confidentiality Agreement;
- Overseeing any requests relating to you (for example, requests for interruptions of study or extensions);
- Providing pastoral, support and guidance to you and signposting you to any relevant University services;
- Offering support to you in your personal and career development;
- Providing supervisory input for your Annual Progress Review;
- Arranging and coordinating your final examination.

10.4   The Lead Supervisor

In many instances, the Academic Supervisor and the lead supervisor will be the same person. The lead supervisor is responsible for overseeing your research project. This includes:

- Introducing you to your Academic Unit, including the facilities available to you and the procedures you need to be aware of;
- Agreeing a suitable research field of enquiry with you;
- Helping you to manage your research project, for example by arranging a timetable of regular meetings, arranging a realistic timetable for submission and completion (in line with any maximum candidature requirements from funders and/or the University), and agreeing a schedule to provide you with regular and timely feedback on your work;
- Chairing formal supervisory meetings;
- Encouraging you to attend researcher development sessions within the University, as well to attend and present your work at internal and external conferences, workshops and seminars;
- Agreeing the outcome of any meetings with you on NU Reflect.

10.5 Co-Supervisor

If your supervisory team includes any co-supervisors, their role is to:

- Be familiar with the progress of your work and provide you with feedback and comments where required by your lead supervisor;
- Attend formal supervisory meetings at least 3 times per year, or additionally as required by you or your lead supervisor;
- Provide additional advice where required, for example by supervising specific elements of your research or thesis preparation;
- Take on the responsibilities of the lead supervisor if they are unable to continue for any reason (for example, if they are ill or leave the institution);
- Act as a mentor to you and help you resolve any academic or University-related issues that cannot be resolved by your lead supervisor.

10.6 Academic Unit Responsibilities

Your Academic Unit is responsible for making sure that you have appropriate supervision arrangements in place.

If any member of your supervisory team leaves the University or is absent from the University for more than three months, your Academic Unit will make arrangements for an appropriate alternative supervisor to be provided so that you have continuity of supervision. This change in supervision arrangements will be reported formally to the Graduate School. Where the absence is due to a period of parental leave, the supervisor should discuss supervisory arrangements during parental leave with the Head of Academic Unit/Director of Postgraduate Studies. If a supervisor wishes to use Keeping in Touch days to provide supervisory input during their parental leave, this could be taken into consideration and the appointment of an additional supervisor, may not be required.

Academic Units are responsible for making sure that individual supervisors are able to manage appropriate workloads. In practice, this means that individual supervisors cannot normally take on more than six full-time equivalent research students. In cases where a supervisor is permitted to take on more than six full-time equivalent students, it is the responsibility of the Head of the Academic Unit to ensure that the overall workload of the supervisor is adjusted to allow supervisors to meet their supervisory responsibilities for all their research students.

Your Academic Unit will inform you of the details of nominated contacts within your Faculty who are available to provide you with confidential advice and support outside of your supervisory team. This will normally include:

- A Faculty Postgraduate Tutor, who will have considerable experience of postgraduate matters and can be contacted for impartial and confidential advice at any stage of your programme of studies;
- Your Faculty Graduate School Manager;
- Faculty Wellbeing support;
- Other relevant colleagues at Academic Unit and/or programme level.

Academic Units are also required to provide nominated contacts who supervisors can contact to access confidential advice and support if they have any concerns about your progress, ability, or application to your programme of study. This is usually the Director of Postgraduate Studies, or equivalent, the Dean of Postgraduate Studies and the relevant Faculty Graduate School Manager.

10.7 Contact with the Supervisory Team

You are required to maintain regular formal contact with your supervisory team while you are registered through to completion of your programme.

For the purposes of the Code of Practice, 'formal contact' is defined as a structured interaction (whether in person, online via Teams, or over email (in certain circumstances, such as if you are undertaking field work or are studying at another institution as part of a CASE studentship) where you and your supervisory team engage in a meaningful discussion about your research and agree an action plan. At the start of your research project, you should discuss and agree the arrangements for regular formal contact with your supervisors. This should include the format for these meetings, including the agenda, purpose, the type of contact expected (in person, online, via email), frequency, and who is responsible for arranging formal contact. These arrangements need to be formalised and recorded within your Learning Agreement.

You need to record and confirm the outcomes of your formal supervisory contact on NU Reflect.

As a minimum, **full-time** students are required to have:

- Regular formal contact with your lead supervisor, at least ten times per year (approximately once per month). You should not normally go more than eight weeks between supervision meetings until the submission of your thesis; and
- Regular formal contact with each member of your supervisory team, at least three times per year; and
- At least one meeting per year with your full supervisory team, usually in advance of your Annual Progress Review.

If you are a **part-time** student or you are studying away from an approved University campus, you are still required to have regular formal contact with your supervisory team. You should discuss and agree the number and type of formal interactions with your supervisor team as part of your Learning Agreement. You should not go more than ten weeks between supervisory meetings, until submission of your thesis.

If you are a **Student Visa holder**, you will need to continue having regular formal contact with your supervisory team - and ensure a record of this contact is maintained – while your thesis is under examination, until the completion of your studies. This is a condition of your student visa, and records and outcomes of formal meetings may be requested by the UK Home Office as part of the University's sponsorship duties.

In addition to the formal supervisory contact set out above, you are also responsible for promptly bringing any issues affecting your research project to the attention of your supervisory team so they can provide you with appropriate support. This includes academic problems and any non-academic problems which may have an impact on your research (for example, financial, social, domestic or health-related problems).

10.8 Changes to Supervisory Teams

If any member of your supervisory team is temporarily absent (up to three months) from the University (for example, because of research leave or periods of ill-health), other members of your supervisory team will normally continue to supervise you and will also take on the additional supervisory responsibilities of the absent supervisor. Occasionally it may be necessary to make permanent changes to your supervisory team, especially in cases where:

- The academic focus of your project changes, and your current supervisors no longer have the required knowledge or expertise to be able to provide you with appropriate supervision;
- Members of the supervisory team have left the employment of the University;
- Members of the supervisory team are absent from the University for more than three months.

If it is necessary to make permanent changes to your supervisory team, you will normally be consulted about this in advance. Where possible, the University will replace your supervisor(s) with suitable alternatives; in

extraordinary cases, this may include arranging for you to have a supervisor from another Academic Unit or a different University.

If you decide to make a significant change to your research project or request a change in supervisory arrangements, it may not always be possible for the University to provide you with a suitable alternative supervisory team due to the specialist nature of postgraduate research study. In such cases, it may not be possible for you to continue with your programme of study at Newcastle University.

On rare occasions, supervisory relations may break down. If this happens, you should consult with another member of the supervisory team in the first instance, to try to resolve the issues that have arisen. If this is not possible, or if the problems persist, you (or a member of your supervisory team) should report your difficulties in confidence to your Head of Academic Unit, Dean of Postgraduate Studies or relevant Graduate School and, wherever possible, prompt action will be taken to try to resolve any conflict. If necessary, either you or a member of your supervisory team may contact the Head of Academic Unit to request a change of supervisor.

All supervisory changes should be sent to the relevant Graduate School, and they will arrange for these to be considered and approved by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies.

11   Development and Approval of Research Project Proposals

Research project proposals may be developed in a number of ways:

- Prior to applying to your postgraduate research programme so you can apply for funding;
- Once you have registered;
- Following the successful completion of any taught phase of a taught/professional doctorate.

Where the research proposal is developed following registration, you need to work with your supervisory team to make sure that the project is achievable within the maximum timeframe of your degree programme, and to confirm there are sufficient resources available to support you to complete your project.

Whether you develop your research project before or after registration, you are required to submit your project proposal to your Academic Unit (via the PGR CoP system) within 3 months of starting your programme (or starting the research element of your programme). This is the case for all research students, even where your project proposal has already been reviewed and approved by external peer review. Your project will then be reviewed by a Project Approval Panel and the Head of Academic Unit.

11.1   Project Approval Panel Membership

The Project Approval Panel normally consists of at least two impartial University academic members of staff (one of whom may be an Emeritus or Honorary member of staff) with the relevant skills and knowledge to assess your project proposal. At least one member of the Project Approval Panel should be demonstrably research-active, and at least one member should have experience of successful research supervision.

When appointing the Project Approval Panel, your Academic Unit will show due consideration to the nature of the project (particularly where the project is interdisciplinary in nature) and the composition of the Panel from an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion perspective.

If any member of the Project Approval Panel has any conflict of interest (for example, if they have a personal or professional relationship with you, or are a member of your supervisory team), they are responsible for declaring it and the Academic Unit will consider whether they are sufficiently impartial to remain on the Panel. If any concerns relating to conflicts (or perceived conflicts) of interest are raised, the Dean of Postgraduate Studies will have the ultimate decision on Project Approval Panel members.

11.2   Project Approval Process

The Project Approval Panel will consider your research proposal, alongside a research plan and a supporting statement from your supervisory team, and will evaluate your project proposal against the following criteria:

- Does the project have clear aims and objectives?

- Do you have the required knowledge, skills and aptitudes to complete the project successfully? If not, can you realistically acquire these?
- Does your proposed supervisory team have the required knowledge, skills and aptitudes to supervise your project to a successful conclusion? If not, can they realistically acquire these?
- Is your proposed project suitable for the programme of study and the award?
- Can the project be realistically completed within the timeframes set out for the programme of study?
- Are the necessary resources available to you to be able to complete the project?
- Is ethical approval required?
- Where the project includes extended absence from the University to undertake fieldwork or research in collaborating organisations, are the appropriate arrangements in place to support you and monitor your progress?

The Project Approval Panel will then make a recommendation and written report on your proposal, which will be available to you and your supervisory team via the PGR CoP system once it has been confirmed by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies. The recommendation will be either 'Approval' or 'Resubmission'.

A 'Resubmission' recommendation will be made where the Panel has significant concerns about your proposal. In this case, the Panel's report will indicate the steps you need to take to address these concerns. You will be required to resubmit your proposal within a maximum of three months (full-time students) or six months (part-time students), unless advised otherwise by your Academic Unit/Faculty.

If, after resubmission, the Panel is satisfied that you have address their concerns, they will recommend to the Head of Academic Unit and Dean of Postgraduate Studies that your project is approved.

If, after resubmission, the Panel does **not** feel that you have addressed their concerns, they will make a recommendation of 'Project Not Approved' to the Head of Unit and Dean of Postgraduate Studies. If the Dean of Postgraduate Studies confirms this recommendation, your registration will be withdrawn and you will not be able to continue as a registered student. The Panel will not normally recommend a withdrawal of registration without first giving you the opportunity to address any issues with your research proposal through a resubmission opportunity.

All approved project proposals will be formally recorded on your student record, along with details of your supervisory arrangements.

It is your responsibility to make sure you understand and accept feedback from both the Project Approval Panel and your supervisory team. It is also your responsibility to ensure that you keep your research project on track so that it is completed within the normal timescales for your programme.

11.3   Declaration of Personal Interest

The University acknowledges the professional and ethical responsibility to protect the interests of our students, and that all relationships with them must feature trust, confidence and equal treatment. The University **does not accept** close personal or intimate relationships between colleagues and students where there is direct supervision. All members of staff are required to declare any personal relationships with a student they are asked to supervise or are already supervising to their line manager, who will consider alternative arrangements to reduce or eliminate the potential conflicts of interest arising. *(Further information is available in the [Personal Relationships at Work Policy](.)*

12.   Progression and Monitoring

Your progress will be reviewed annually by an impartial Annual Progress Review (APR) Panel. This is normally the same panel that approved your research project and supervisory arrangements at the start of your programme.

If your supervisory team has any concerns about your progress at times other than the normal annual review of your progress, they should raise this with you in writing (normally by email) and invite you to a meeting to discuss their concerns. They should then provide you with written comments from the supervisory team and clearly outline the steps you need to take to address the issues raised. They should then agree with you a

timeframe for addressing the concerns and a date for further review of your progress. If, after this process, your supervisory team feels that your progress continues to be a concern, they will inform you in writing that this will be referred to an Extraordinary Progress Review (EPR) Panel for further consideration. Your supervisory team will provide copies of any communication to the relevant Graduate School.

12.1 Annual Progress Review Panel Membership

When appointing the APR Panel, your Academic Unit will show due consideration to the nature of the project (particularly where the project is interdisciplinary in nature) and the composition of the Panel from an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion perspective.

If any member of the APR Panel has any conflict of interest (for example, if they have a personal or professional relationship with you, or are a member of your supervisory team, or alternative examiner), they are responsible for declaring it and the Academic Unit will consider whether they are sufficiently impartial to remain on the Panel. If any concerns relating to conflicts (or perceived conflicts) of interest are raised, the Dean of Postgraduate Studies will have the ultimate decision on Panel members.

12.2 Annual Progress Review Process

All full-time and part-time research students are required to engage with the APR process. The progression requirements will be clearly specified and made available to you, your supervisory team, and the APR Panel by your Academic Unit/Faculty.

You will need to submit an APR report to the APR Panel every year until you have submitted your thesis for examination. In addition, you may also be asked to submit a piece of work for review, give a presentation on your research, undergo a viva or interview, and/or provide evidence of research training undertaken. Your supervisory team will also provide an annual report on your progress to the APR panel. All reports are submitted via the PGR CoP system.

The APR Panel will consider all the evidence available to them alongside the APR criteria below to determine whether you are making satisfactory progress:

- Whether the project still has clear aims and objectives;
- Whether progress indicates that the research project will meet the standards for the award (as set out in section 17) and be completed by the maximum candidature date for your programme.
- That you have (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 sufficient resources are available to complete the project;
- Whether there are any risks to the successful completion of the project.

The APR Panel will produce a report outlining their progress recommendation and comments, which will be approved by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies and shared with you and your supervisory team via the PGR CoP system.

The following progression recommendations are available to the APR Panel:

i.   Proceed
ii. Proceed with Concerns
iii. Re-Submission
iv. Downgrade to MPhil (for Doctoral students only)
v.   Withdrawal of Registration

If the APR Panel is satisfied that you meet the criteria for progression (Recommendations i and ii), they will recommend to the Dean of Postgraduate Studies that you proceed and registration on your programme should be continued.

If the APR Panel is **not** satisfied that you meet the criteria for progression (Recommendation iii), they will inform you and your supervisory team what you need to do in order to get your project back on track and will set a date for further review. This will normally be within two months (full-time students) or four months (part-time students). You will then need to work with your supervisory team to determine and agree an

action plan to ensure that your research project will meet the required progress standards by the review date.

The APR Panel will then reconvene on the date set for review and consider whether you have responded appropriately to the concerns raised. Where the evidence demonstrates that you are now likely to meet the standards for the award by the maximum candidature date, the APR Panel will make a proceed recommendation to the Dean of Postgraduate Studies that you should progress to the next year of your programme.

If the APR Panel feels that the evidence does **not** demonstrate that your research project will meet the standards for the award because your supervisory arrangements are not adequate or appropriate, they may seek the approval from the Head of Academic Unit to make a proceed (Recommendation i) or proceed with concerns (Recommendation ii) recommendation to the Dean of Postgraduate Studies that some or all of your supervisory team is replaced. The APR should not normally recommend that your registration is downgraded to MPhil (recommendation iv) or withdrawn (recommendation v), without having previously provided you with a re-submission opportunity (recommendation iii).

If the APR panel does not believe that you are able to achieve the required standards for the award, it may recommend to the Dean of Postgraduate Studies that you be registered for a lower degree (Recommendation iv), or that your registration is withdrawn (Recommendation v).

The final decision on a student's progression is taken by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies, although your Academic Unit may provide you with provisional feedback after the APR Panel has met.

Where appropriate, reports on progress should be made to sponsors and copied to the Graduate School.

13.   Personal Extenuating Circumstances

13a.   Prior to Submission of your Thesis

There may be times throughout the duration of your studies when your personal extenuating circumstances affect your ability to undertake your research project. In these cases. If your personal circumstances are impacting on your studies, there are established procedures in place to help you. You can apply via the PGR CoP system for an interruption of studies, change of candidature or an extension to your thesis submission deadline.

If you require time away from your research project for personal, medical reasons, an interruption of studies can be applied for which provides you with a complete break from your studies. There are no tuition fees payable during the interruption, and you do not lose any of your period of candidature.

An extension to your thesis submission deadline can be granted in exceptional and unforeseen circumstances by the relevant Dean of Postgraduate Studies. Examples of such circumstances are:

- Severe chronic conditions that can "flair up" inconsistently and which can be extremely difficult to predict or manage;
- Very severe and devastating personal tragedy;
- Sudden and catastrophic changes in supervisory team.

There is usually a fee associated with an extension. Further information is available [here].

13b.   After Submission of your Thesis

If you experience any personal extenuating circumstances following submission of your thesis that you feel may affect your examination, you should contact your supervisory team and/or the Graduate School as soon as possible. They may determine that it would be best to postpone or delay your examination, or they may contact your examiners and the Dean of Postgraduate Studies to determine if any reasonable adjustments could be put in place for you.

Although the examiners may take your personal circumstances into account when considering the recommendations open to them, it is important to note that they will still be required to assess your research

against the published assessment criteria for your relevant research degree.

By attending your oral examination, you are declaring that you are fit to do so. If you subsequently submit a claim that your performance within the examination was affected by ill-health or other personal circumstances, it is unlikely that this would be accepted as valid grounds to appeal any decision made within the examination.

If you have a Student Support Plan this should be reviewed in advance of your oral examination to identify if any reasonable adjustments are required for the oral examination.

14. Examination

A thesis demonstrates your ability to undertake original research. It is crucial that your research is your own intellectual property and that the theoretical perspectives, methodological approaches, data interpretation and conclusions drawn are all your own.

You will have an oral examination which is intended to give you the opportunity to:

- Evidence that your research has been carried out by you;
- Defend your thesis, including your methodologies and conclusions;
- Establish that you have a satisfactory level of knowledge of the wider field within which your research is situated.

If you have had to change your thesis from your original research proposal due to COVID-19, you are advised to include a statement to explain to your examiners how your research has been impacted by COVID-19 restrictions. Although the examiners will still need to assess you against the assessment criteria for your degree, this may provide them with important contextual information and can be taken into account when they consider the recommendations open to them.

14.1 Examiners

All research degrees are examined by two examiners. There will ordinarily be one External Examiner and one Internal Examiner appointed for you. However, in certain circumstances two External Examiners will be required:

- If you are a staff candidate and have been employed in parallel at the University for the majority of your candidature.
- If you have undertaken any teaching activities as a Postgraduate Teaching Assistant, you would normally have two External Examiners appointed. (If you have undertaken any teaching activities as an Occasional Postgraduate Teacher or Contracted Postgraduate Teacher, you would have one Internal and one External Examiner appointed.)

Examiners are normally nominated by your supervisory team on behalf of the Head of Academic Unit. You will have the opportunity to comment on the proposed examiners and to request review of the examiner appointments if you believe there may be a conflict of interest or bias or prejudice on the part of a proposed examiner. If there is an actual or perceived conflict of interest, the Dean of Postgraduate Studies will have the final decision with regards to the appointment of examiners.

It is the responsibility of any proposed or appointed examiner to declare if they have a conflict of interest, such as a personal or professional relationship with you, your supervisory team, or a co-examiner. They should also provide a written acknowledgement of any papers co-authored between the examiners and your supervisory team within the last five years, with a clear factual statement of any relationship of their work to your thesis (for example, if they would expect their work to be cited within your thesis).

Once the examiners have been appointed, your supervisory team is responsible for ensuring that all necessary administrative arrangements for the examination are in place. This includes communicating with the Graduate School regarding any personal circumstances you have or adjustments you may require which may affect the conduct of your examination. The normal period between submission of a thesis and an examination is ten weeks, although circumstances may necessitate a longer time frame. The Graduate School will keep you informed of the progress of the examination, should the examination process extend beyond

the normal ten-week period.

14.2   External Examiners

External examiners are recognised authorities in their field of research and provide an important external oversight of the examination process. They should normally be appointed from research-intensive universities to ensure consistency of standards across all Faculties.

External Examiners must:

- Have significant experience and knowledge of your subject area;
- Be independent and have no obvious conflicts of interest;
- Have a research degree or equivalent professional experience;
- Be demonstrably research-active within the discipline within the last two years (the information provided to support the appointment of the examiner must 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:

- Have studied or worked at Newcastle University within the last five years;
- Be appointed on such a regular basis that their familiarity with the Academic Unit might influence their ability to remain impartial. Although each appointment is considered on a case-by-case basis, an external examiner should not normally be appointed more than once in any 12-month period;
- Have a close relationship with you or a member of your supervisory team (for example, have collaborated, published or worked directly with either you or any of your supervisors to a significant degree within the last five years);
- Be an honorary member of staff at Newcastle University.

14.3   Internal Examiners

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

Internal Examiners must:

- Be employed by Newcastle University;
- Be registered on the Graduate School's approved list of research supervisors;
- Have expertise in the broad field of your thesis;
- Be familiar with the University's procedures for the examination of research degrees.

If the Internal Examiner has not yet conducted an examination at Newcastle University, they will be briefed by the Academic Unit and an Independent Chair may also be appointed. (*However, where a proposed Internal Examiner has attended the 'Assessing Research Degree's workshop, the requirements for an Independent Chair may be waived.*)

In some cases, the Dean of Postgraduate Studies may consider appointing an emeritus member of staff as Internal Examiner, providing they have suitable expertise in their field and are still research-active. Any emeritus member of staff would be expected to be involved in any appeal or complaint arising from the examination process in the same way as any other internal examiner.

Internal Examiners must not:

- Have been directly involved with your research project;
- Be a member of your supervisory team;
- Be a postgraduate student (unless they are a member of staff undertaking further postgraduate study);
- Be a visiting member of Newcastle University.
- Have a conflict of interest (see Section 14.5 below).

14.4 Independent Chair

Independent Chairs make sure that the University's examination processes are followed correctly and fairly, but they do not take any part in the assessment process. They will normally be present for the duration of your oral examination (including the pre-meeting and post-meeting discussion between the examiners). They will not be required to take notes, but they will be required to provide a summary report of the proceedings to the Graduate School following the examination.

An Independent Chair is always required where:

- Two External Examiners are appointed; or
- The Internal Examiner has no previous experience of examining a research degree.

An Independent Chair may be required where:

- The Examiners of the thesis require the assistance of an independent authority to conduct the examination process.
- The Dean of Postgraduate Studies deems an independent authority is needed to ensure the examination process is conducted fairly, where the examination is likely to be problematic.
- There are reasonable adjustments in place in response to a Student Support Plan.
- You have requested this on medical/personal/cultural grounds.

Independent Chairs must:
- Normally be an academic at Senior Lecturer/Reader level or above;
- Be familiar with the University's examination processes for research degrees;
- Have substantial experience of postgraduate research and examination.

Independent Chairs must not:
- Be a member of your supervisory team, or have played any role in your research;
- Normally be from your or your supervisory team's subject area.

14.5 Conflicts of Interest (Examiners)

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 you, a member of your supervisory team or co-Examiner. This should include an acknowledgement of all papers co-authored between the supervisors and proposed external examiner in the last five years, with a clear factual statement of any relationship to the thesis, e.g. if the work would be expected to be cited in the thesis. If there are co-authored papers which constitute **significant** prior work, then this would likely be considered a conflict of interest.

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 will make a judgement in consultation with the relevant Academic Unit and may ask for an alternative examiner to be nominated. The Dean of Postgraduate Studies has the final decision in the appointment of Examiners.

15. Examination Arrangements

It is the responsibility of your supervisory team to arrange your examination. Under no circumstances will this be delegated to you.

Arrangements for your examination will be sent to you in writing (normally by email) by your supervisory team. This will include the date, time and location of your examination, the details of your examiners and, where relevant, the details of the Independent Chair. This will also be provided to your examiners, the Graduate School and, where relevant, the Independent Chair. When scheduling your examination, your supervisory team will need to make sure that there is sufficient time to allow the thesis to be sent and fully considered by the examiners.

Your examiners will receive confirmation of appointment from the relevant Graduate School, along with

copies of the Assessment Regulations and the University's Handbook for Examiners of Research Degrees, which sets out the criteria for the award.

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 you, your examiners and your supervisory team.

Your supervisors will help you to prepare for your oral examination and, where practical, will offer you a practice session.

If you wish, you can ask for a member of your supervisory team to be present with you during your examination. Their role will be as a non-contributing observer, unless asked to contribute by the Chair. If you do not wish for a member of your supervisory team to be present, they will normally be available for consultation during the examination.

Prior to the examination, there should normally be no discussion about the examination itself between you and your examiners, or between your examiners and your supervisory team.

16.   Examination of your Thesis

Your examiners will make a preliminary written independent report on your thesis before your examination, and this will be sent to the Graduate School approximately two weeks prior to the date of your examination. Prior to the submission of these independent reports, the examiners should not be in direct contact with one another about your thesis or examination.

Your examination will normally be chaired by the internal examiner, unless an Independent Chair has been appointed; however, the examiners will discuss and decide chairing arrangements in their pre-meeting. The chair has overall responsibility for conducting the examination in accordance with the University's procedures.

Following the examination, the examiners will normally write a joint report and make an appropriate recommendation in respect of the award. The available recommendations are outlined in the Doctor of Philosophy and Master of Philosophy Assessment Regulations available here.

If the examiners recommend corrections/revisions or a resubmission, they should provide you with a comprehensive report detailing what you need to do to achieve the award within the resubmission period. The joint report should also provide comments on the broader issues of research skills and environment and should be sent to the Graduate School for approval by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies.

If the examiners disagree on the outcome of the examination, they may provide separate reports, which will be considered by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies.

The Graduate School will send a copy of the joint report, along with the statement of any corrections/revisions required, to you, your supervisory team, and the Head of Academic Unit. There should continue to be no direct contact between you and your examiners during this period. If you need any clarification on any points raised by the examiners, you should approach your supervisors for this.

17.   Criteria for Research Degrees

17.1   The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies set out the requirements for all degree qualifications in the UK.

For all research degrees, the work presented for examination should be:

- Original: the work should be your own, all sources should be properly referenced, and you should not use anyone else's work without acknowledging it appropriately;
- Scholarly: the work should demonstrate an in-depth knowledge of the topic, and you should be able to demonstrate that you have applied critical thinking in your assessment of the evidence and wider literature. Any sources used should be cited consistently, accurately and correctly within both the text and the bibliography;

- Professional: you should be able to demonstrate that you have a good understanding of your role in relation to the wider research process and that you are capable of conducting research within the standard ethical practices of your subject area;
- Well-structured, written and presented: or, in the case of alternative research submissions (such as compositions, exhibitions, artefacts or other products arising from the research), arranged and presented in an orderly and coherent way.

17.2 Criteria for Doctoral Degrees

To be awarded a doctoral degree, you need to demonstrate your ability to:

- Understand and interpret complex information;
- Contribute new knowledge through original research and advanced scholarship;
- Show a thorough and systematic understanding of the existing knowledge within your field of research;
- Critically evaluate and test theories and relate them to a wider body of knowledge;
- Understand appropriate research techniques, methods and approaches and how these can be adopted and applied to your field of enquiry;
- Design and manage a research project;
- Produce research outputs at a standard high enough for publication, performance or exhibition.

17.3   Criteria for MPhil Degrees
MPhils are normally more focused or limited in scope than a doctoral degree. Relative to the doctoral degree, the MPhil will have less emphasis on an original contribution to knowledge and need not be worthy of publication, performance or exhibition.

To be awarded an MPhil, you need to demonstrate your ability to:

- Show a thorough and systematic understanding of the existing knowledge within your field of research;
- Evaluate and engage critically with current research and advanced scholarship;
- Understand appropriate research techniques, methods and approaches and how these can be adopted and applied to your field of enquiry;
- Design and manage a research project which demonstrates your understanding of how to conduct research.

18.   Use of Third-Party Services

Students are permitted to use some third-party services, such as professional proof-readers, help from other students, or specialist editing software. However, the type of help and the extent to which you use this throughout your work, must be clearly acknowledged. You should provide a statement within your thesis which clearly states where you have used third-party services. This should specify the nature of the contribution and by whom.

You **are** allowed to use third-party assistance to:

- Help with spelling, punctuation and grammar;
- Help you to improve the format and layout of your work, such as by editing sentences and paragraphs.

You **are not allowed** to use third-party assistance to:

- Change, clarify or develop the argument of your thesis;
- Add to the references you have used;
- Correct any factual information contained within your thesis;
- Translate significant amounts of work that are integral to your thesis;
- Significantly reduce the length of your thesis;
- Substantially change the organisation of your thesis.

19.   Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools

If you have used any AI tools in the preparation of your thesis, it is important that you clearly and transparently acknowledge this. You should provide a statement alongside your thesis which sets out how, why and when AI was used.

You **are not allowed** to submit AI-generated text, even when the ideas or concepts are your own. If you submit AI-generated text, this will be considered academic misconduct and will be investigated in line with the University's Academic Misconduct Procedure.

20. Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework

The University has a Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework which ensures that all research programmes meet high standards. It is applicable to all elements of research programmes, including any taught components.

Under the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework, the University is able to assess the effectiveness of research programmes, share best practice and feedback from external sources, and consider ways in which the student experience can be enhanced.

The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework has two stages:

- Annual check-in report – this provides Academic Units with a formal opportunity to monitor the effectiveness of research degree provision;
- Review Visits – within each Faculty, at least one Academic Unit is visited each Academic Year. During these visits, a review panel evaluate the Academic Unit's efficacy, meet students, and ask questions of the Academic Unit.

The results of the Annual check-ins and Review visits are reported annually by the Faculty Postgraduate Research Committees, to the Postgraduate Research Sub-Committee of University Research and Innovation Committee and University Education Committee.

21. Student Complaints

If you wish to make a complaint about the service you have received from the University, your learning experience, or the conduct of a University employee, you can do this via the Student Complaints and Resolution Procedure.

In line with Level 1 of the Student Complaints and Resolution Procedure, you should try to resolve your complaint or concern informally with the person(s) concerned wherever possible. Alternatively, you should seek help or advice from your tutor, supervisor or Head of School, or through the appropriate Head of Service.

Where it has not been possible to resolve your issues informally, or where you believe that the issues you have experienced are more serious, you may wish to submit a formal Level 2 complaint to the University. In such circumstances, you should complete a Student Complaints and Resolution Form and provide any supporting information or evidence.

If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the formal Level 2 complaint, you may submit a Level 3 Request to review the outcome, which will be considered by the Academic Registrar.

22. Academic Queries and Appeals

If you wish to appeal against an academic decision (such as progression decision, examination result, or the outcome of a Dean of Postgraduate Studies request), you can do this via the Academic Queries and Appeals Procedure.

In line with Level 1 of the Academic Queries and Appeals Procedure, you should try to resolve your query informally directly with your Academic Unit in the first instance. You can do this by contacting the relevant Graduate School Manager for your programme of study.

Where it has not been possible to resolve your issues informally, or where you are dissatisfied with the Level 1 outcome, you may wish to submit a formal Level 2 academic appeal to the University. In such circumstances, you should complete an Academic Queries and Appeals Form and provide any supporting information or evidence.

If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the formal Level 2 appeal, you may submit a Level 3 Request to review the outcome, which will be considered by the Academic Registrar.

Addendum to the Code of Practice for Research Masters' Degree Programmes

i.   **Introduction**

This Addendum to the Code of Practice sets 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.   **Selection of Research Students**

There are rigorous selection policies and procedures in place for all Postgraduate Admissions.

For Research Masters' students, this will usually involve interviews, where appropriate, and the Degree Programme Director or PGR Director who will act on behalf of the Head of Academic Unit to approve any offer of a place on a programme. Any offer of a place on a programme of study is normally conditional upon the receipt of two satisfactory references.

iii.   **Learning Agreements**

Your Academic Unit will work with you to complete a formal Learning Agreement when you start your research dissertation. They will discuss with you the expectations of your research programme and make sure that you have fully understood these. Your Learning Agreement will need to be signed by you and your Research Dissertation Supervisor and/or Degree Programme Director.

iv.   **The Development of Relevant Knowledge and Skills**

You will be offered the opportunity to develop research skills and knowledge that are appropriate and relevant to your programme.

v.   **Attendance**

There are minimum attendance requirements for your programme. During the research project/dissertation stage of your programme, you should meet with your allocated supervisor at least once per month. You should record these meetings – including any actions or outcomes – on NU Reflect.

vi.   **Supervisory Arrangements**

You will have an individual supervisor for the research dissertation element of your programme, who will be a research-active academic member of staff. You will also have a secondary advisor for your project, who will be your Degree Programme Director, the School Director of Postgraduate Studies, or an additional subject expert.

vii.   **Development and Approval of Research Project Proposals**

You should develop your research project (or dissertation) proposal before you start the research element of your programme.

In addition to your dissertation supervisor's approval, you will need to obtain approval for your project from your Degree Programme Director or PGR Director. They will evaluate your research proposal against the following criteria:

- Does your dissertation have clear aims and objectives?
- Do you have the appropriate skills and knowledge to complete the dissertation successfully? If not, are you reasonably able to acquire the relevant skills and knowledge?
- Do your proposed supervisors have (or are they able to acquire) the appropriate skills and knowledge to supervise your dissertation to a successful completion
- Is the dissertation suitable for your programme of study and the award?
- Can you feasibly complete the dissertation in the maximum timescales for your programme?
- Are all the necessary resources available to you to complete your dissertation?

viii.   **Progression and Monitoring**

Your progress on your research masters' programme will be monitored formally by your Degree Programme

Director or PGR Director. This will include a review of your progress following any taught elements of your programme.

If your Degree Programme Director or PGR Director has any concerns about your progress at any point during your programme, they will inform you in writing and invite you to a meeting to discuss their concerns. During the meeting, they will discuss with you the written feedback of your supervisory team and will agree with you a plan of action and a date to review your progress against this plan.

If your progress continues to be a concern after this review date, you will be informed of this in writing and notified of what the possible consequences of this are. This may include a suspension or termination of your studies.

ix. **Examination**

All research degree projects or dissertations must be examined by two examiners - normally one Internal Examiner and one External Examiner. Staff candidates will normally be examined by two External Examiners, however, if you have been in post for 12 months or less, one External Examiner and one Internal Examiner may be appointed at the discretion of the Dean of Postgraduate Studies.

Your Research Dissertation supervisor is responsible for nominating suitable examiners for your research project or dissertation, on behalf of your Head of Academic Unit. All examiners will be demonstrably research-active in a relevant field, and independent of your project (for example, they cannot be your project supervisor or other academic advisor). They should also meet the criteria for appointment of examiners.

Your examiners will provide written reports of their assessments of your project and will make an appropriate recommendation to your School regarding the award. If the examiners' recommendation is that you resubmit your research project or dissertation, you will be provided with a statement of the work to be done in order to meet the criteria for the award within the resubmission period allowed.