

The Research Degrees Handbook (RDH)

Course: PGR Students (Doctoral College)

Book: Introduction and Handbook

Moodle page updated on **25 November 2024**.

Introduction

This Handbook should be read in conjunction with the [University-wide Academic Regulations](#).

It has been prepared to help explain the obligatory and operational aspects of research degree programmes.

Faculty or Programme supplements, outlining local resources and expectations, can be found [in this page](#). As a research degree student, you are also required to read and adhere to, among others, the following University of Plymouth policies and procedures:

- [Intellectual Property Policy](#)
- Research Ethics Policy, the Code of Good Research Practice and the Research Data Policy, all available in the [Research Ethics](#) page
- [Research Data Management](#)
- [Code of Practice for Off-site Activities and Fieldwork](#)

Please note that aspects of this Handbook that are relevant to your professional doctorate programme (EdD, DBA, DPA) will be either included in or signposted from your programme handbook.

If you are in receipt of a University Research Studentship (URS), please refer to the URS guidelines attached to your offer letter. For the most up to date document, please visit the [Postgraduate research studentships](#) page.

If you have any comments, questions or suggestions related to this Handbook, please contact the [Doctoral College](#).

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1. Key Contacts

1.1. Director of Studies

Your Director of Studies (DoS) will be your main contact during your studies. Your DoS must be a member of staff at the University of Plymouth, an approved member of the NHS with an associated University of Plymouth contract or a member of staff in an approved partnership agreement. The responsibilities of your **Director of Studies** are as follows:

- to provide the leadership of the supervisory team and to provide support to you on an agreed, regular and frequent basis,
- to impart knowledge in the area of your research programme and/or your theoretical or methodological approach,
- to develop an effective working relationship with you and to provide an encouraging and supportive environment,
- to maintain regular contact through meetings and to co-ordinate meetings with the other supervisors as well as being responsive to your needs outside of agreed meeting times,
- to encourage you to keep a record of supervisory meetings (please note your DoS may keep their own notes, but this is your degree, not your DoS's!),
- to introduce you to external publications, professional bodies, contacts and sources in your field of study, to involve you in the activities of a research group and its workshops and conferences,
- to assist with the planning of your research programme, advise on literature sources, investigative and analytical techniques and arrange a programme of advanced training in generic and specific aspects of your research programme,
- to provide assistance with a project structure, work plan and milestones, in conjunction with you and other supervisors,
- to advise you on timing for the various stages of work and help to ensure that your thesis is submitted within the required time period,
- to assist you in the self-assessment of personal and professional skills,
- to request written or creative work regularly and arrange for presentations of work and provide constructive criticism and feedback normally within 20 working days of receipt (unless previously negotiated with you),
- to ensure that you are aware of what is expected of you as a student and to ensure that you are informed as to whether you are attaining the standard expected, and where progress is not of the required standard to provide support and assistance to improve performance,

- to assist in ensuring that the intellectual property rights and copyright of written works are protected and that any period of confidentiality of the thesis is requested as required,
- to advise on University regulations and deadlines,
- where links with a collaborating organisation exist, to encourage the development of a mutually beneficial relationship between you and the organisation,
- to provide close and regular monitoring and to ensure that Annual Monitoring reports are completed,
- to propose an appropriate examination team 4 months in advance of you submitting your thesis for examination, and
- to organise and arrange your oral (*viva voce*) examination, liaising with you, the examiners, the Doctoral College, and the chair where appointed.

1.2. The Supervisory Team

In addition to your DoS, you will have at least one other supervisor. These may be staff who are employed outside the University of Plymouth. The responsibilities of **your second supervisor and any other supervisors** are as follows:

- to maintain active involvement with your project and keep in regular communication with you and your Director of Studies,
- to provide primary support on a temporary basis, in the absence of your Director of Studies,
- to become acting Director of Studies if the Director of Studies ceases employment as an academic staff of the University or as an approved member of staff at a Node until a replacement supervisory team is formally approved,
- to provide you with additional, often specialist, guidance, support and feedback (as agreed and negotiated), and to assist in your progression where possible,
- to maintain an awareness of the status of your progress and to 'sign off' progression milestones (e.g. Project Approval and Confirmation of Route) in a timely fashion on [GradBook](#),
- to attend the minimum number of regular meetings with you and your Director of Studies (4 for full-time and 3 for part-time students per year), and to 'sign off' these interactions on [GradBook](#), and
- for 2nd supervisors, to act as a mentor for Directors of Studies who have not had previously supervised a research degree to completion at this level.

There will not normally more than three people in your supervisory team, including your DoS. Your DoS and any UoP supervisors are required to complete mandatory training, which is refreshed every three years.

For students enrolled in a Professional Doctorate, your Programme Manager will act as your “Director of Studies” for the duration of the taught phase of your degree. A Director of Studies and at least one other supervisor will be allocated to you at the end of your taught phase.

Professional Doctorate students will be given access to [GradBook](#) once you commence the research phase of your degree.

If you have supervisors who are in a personal relationship with each other (e.g they are married), it is recommended that a third supervisor is included in the team.

1.3. Schools and Faculties

You will be part of the academic School and Faculty where your DoS is based. Schools and Faculties provide support for research students, including the provision of workspace, administrative support for research activities and, more generally, ensuring an active research culture that brings you into contact with other researchers, staff and students. Further details can be found in School and Faculty handbooks, which also detail any additional requirements to your studies, and should be read in conjunction with the Research Degrees Handbook.

There is a [Deputy Director of the Doctoral College](#) (DDDC) for each of the three Faculties of the University. DDDCs provide leadership for postgraduate research in their Faculties by developing training opportunities; supporting an active research culture; thinking strategically; developing policy and dealing with issues affecting PGR students. They work closely with the Doctoral College, School and Faculty Leadership and external partners in this role.

Each academic School also has a [PGR Coordinator](#) who is responsible for research students at a School level. Working closely with DDDCs, as well as School and Faculty staff, they ensure that research students are offered a high-quality research environment, appropriate discipline- specific skills training and access to appropriate facilities and resources. Programme Managers act as School PGR Coordinators if you are enrolled in a Professional Doctorate during your research phase. School PGR Coordinators are also responsible for overseeing admission and selection, the nomination of supervisors, quality assurance, Annual Monitoring, Project Approval, Confirmation of Route (if appropriate) and examinations.

1.4. The Doctoral College

The Doctoral College has two main responsibilities.

First, as part of the University Registry, The Doctoral College provides administrative support and quality assurance for your PGR degree. This includes processing admissions, monitoring progress, overseeing key milestones and managing examinations. Doctoral College staff can provide help and advice on any aspect of the PGR journey; they can be emailed at [Doctoral College](#). The Doctoral College Administration (Admissions and Programme Administration teams) side of the Doctoral College are based in the Nancy Astor Building.

Second, the Doctoral College supports your development as a researcher by providing training and supporting career development. This is mainly delivered through the University's [Researcher Development Programme](#). There are regular communications about training opportunities but contact [Research Skills](#) for information. We also welcome any ideas you may have for training courses or sessions.

The Director and Research Development Programme team are located at 3 Kirkby Terrace, which has a teaching room, meeting room, kitchen and patio that are available for students to work in or use. Contact [Research Skills](#) if you would like to book it.

Communications from the Doctoral College, Researcher Development Programme, your School and Faculty are sent using your University email address, which you should check regularly.

2. Wellbeing and Support

We hope that your time at Plymouth will be enjoyable and problem-free. If any problems do arise, whether related to health, finances, academic progress, work or personal matters, please let staff know as soon as possible so that they can support you as much as possible. In most cases, your Director of Studies and supervisors will be the most appropriate people to approach initially. All requests for confidentiality will be respected.

If there is anything you would prefer not to share with your supervisors (perhaps because it is about the nature or quality of your supervision), then please contact your [School PGR Coordinator](#), who will treat your comments with confidence and will work with you to find a solution. If you would prefer not to contact your School Coordinator, then please email your [Deputy Director of the Doctoral College](#).

For matters directly related to your research degree programme, please contact the [Doctoral College](#).

If there is something that you believe impacts upon a wider cohort of researchers, then you can raise this via your representatives at your Faculty Doctoral Committee (if it is local to your Faculty) or else Doctoral College Board (if it is relevant to PGR students from across the University). You may also raise issues via your Annual Monitoring report.

If that seems like a long time to wait or you would like more privacy, contact your [School Postgraduate Research Coordinator](#), your [Deputy Director of the Doctoral College](#) or the [Doctoral College](#).

We have produced a [GradBook guidance for students](#). In the event that you experience a problem with the use of [GradBook](#) and cannot find the answer in this guide, please contact the [Doctoral College](#). If [GradBook](#) isn't working for you as expected or required, please attach a screenshot that demonstrates the problem, and the Doctoral College team will try to find a solution. If unable to do so, you may be asked to raise the issue with the University IT services.

Try to maintain a work-life balance throughout your degree. The South West is a stunning backdrop for postgraduate journey and the [student life](#) pages provide some ideas for [leisure activities](#). As a student, you are also a member of the [University of Plymouth's Student Union](#). UPSU provides a voice for students, supports your time at University, runs a shop and organises a range of social and cultural activities, including societies and sports clubs. It also manages the University's [sports centre](#) that has a gym, sports hall and a range of exercise classes.

We understand that undertaking research degrees can be stressful at times. Remember, there is a range of support available to you. The Student Hub provides advice about student life. [Student Wellbeing Services](#) provide in-person, on-line and electronic support about mental health, wellbeing and personal development. This is available to all postgraduate research students, is located in the Charles Seale-Hayne Library and can also be contacted by emailing [Student Services](#) or calling 01752 587676. [Pastoral and spiritual support](#) can also be accessed at 1 Kirkby Terrace, by contacting 01752 587676 or emailing the [Pastoral and Spiritual Support](#) team.

You are strongly encouraged to draw on these services as and when you need them! They are there to help you!

Finally, the University of Plymouth is a **safe, welcoming** and **diverse** community – our staff, students and anyone interacting with us should feel comfortable being who they are. We believe that bullying, harassment and discrimination are never okay. If you experience any abuse, harm or hate you should report it using our [Speak Up](#) service. This webpage also provides help and support if you experience any of these issues. Any allegations (including [sexual violence](#), abuse or hate) are taken incredibly seriously.

3. Research degrees and conditions

3.1. Research Degrees

This Handbook applies to the following research degree programmes (please note that, depending on funding arrangements, the periods of registration may be different to those outlined below and may not include a writing up phase):

1. ResM – Research Masters: an 18 month full-time (including 6 months writing up period) or 3 year part-time (including a 1 year writing up period) programme that also includes the compulsory completion of 40 credits of taught modules at Level 7. The latter must include a research methods module, appropriate to the discipline, and taught credits applicable to the subject area.

There are progression possibilities for ResM candidates, who can exceptionally apply to continue directly into the PhD programme upon the successful completion of the Confirmation of Route process and transfer to PhD. If this is the case, the maximum period of registration for a PhD will apply. However, if a ResM candidate transfers and continues to PhD then the ResM degree will not be awarded.

2. MPhil – Master of Philosophy: a 3 year full-time or 4 year part-time research degree (including a 1 year writing up period for full-time or part-time students). Length of part-time MPhil programme for students who start their degree on or after 1st August 2024 will be a total of 6 years (including 2 years writing up period)
3. PhD – Doctor of Philosophy: a 4 year full-time (including a 1 year writing up period) or 6 year part-time (including 2 years writing up period) research degree once successfully transferred to PhD. Length of part-time PhD programme for students who start their degree on or after 1st August 2024 will be a total of 8 years (including 2 years writing up period)
4. MD – Doctor of Medicine: a 3 year full-time (including a 1 year writing up period) or 4 year part-time (including a 1 year writing up period) research degree at doctoral level available in the Faculty of Health for qualified doctors registered with the GMC and working in a clinical setting within the U.K. Length of part-time MD programme for students who start their degree on or after 1st August 2024 will be a total of 6 years (including 2 years writing up period)

There are progression possibilities for MD candidates, who can exceptionally apply to continue directly into a PhD programme upon the successful completion of the Confirmation of Route process and transfer to PhD status. If this is the case, the maximum period of registration for a PhD will apply. However, if an MD candidate transfers and continues to PhD then the MD degree will not be awarded.

5. PhD on the Basis of Prior Published Works: a 12 month part-time programme. The work submitted for this degree should consist of a collection of published works, papers, chapters, books, and/or creative works in any media (including suitable documentation of performance, installation, and other temporary works) which together form a coherent programme of research and have been accepted for dissemination by reputable journals, publishing houses, galleries, venues or similar publishing media in the field.
6. Professional Doctorates: Doctor of Education (EdD), Doctor of business Administration (DBA), Doctor of Public Administration (DPA) and Doctor of Engineering (EngD). These are full-time or part-time research degree programmes which include an initial set of taught modules (taught phase) prior to starting the research phase of the programme.

The Doctor of Clinical Psychology is also a professional doctorate. If you are enrolled in this programme, please contact the Faculty of Health for information.

Please refer to your offer letter for the exact information on registration periods that apply to you.

All research degrees are assessed by means of a thesis and an oral (*viva voce*) examination at minimum.

If you are not awarded a research degree or withdraw prior to having the final outcome, then you may be awarded either a PgCert, a PgDip or an MPhil if you have satisfactorily completed the requirements as set out in the [Academic Regulations](#).

You may undertake a programme of research in which creative and/or professional work forms a significant part of the intellectual enquiry. In such cases, the thesis may comprise of both written and practice elements which are examined together as a whole. The form of the latter and its documentation/inclusion within the final version of the thesis must be approved in advance by your approved thesis examiners. If your research forms part of a wider group project working under a Principal Investigator (PI), you may each register for a research degree to be submitted individually for examination; these theses must be distinguishable for the purposes of assessment.

You may undertake a programme of research of which the principal focus is the preparation of a scholarly edition of a text or texts, musical or choreographic work or other original artefacts. In such cases, examination may include a presentation in addition to the other elements of assessment (that is, in addition to the written element of the thesis, submitted supplementary materials and *viva voce* examination).

It is also possible to include published work as part of your thesis. If you publish work during your registration, this can be included in lieu of a chapter. Work published prior to registration may only from part of a PhD on the Basis of Prior Published Works.

You must undertake a programme of related studies as deemed necessary by your DoS and/or School/Faculty, in order to gain competence in appropriate research methods and related knowledge of the subject of the thesis. In some cases, this includes passing credit-rated modules. If these modules, or other training requirements, are identified in your Offer Letter or in your Programme webpages, then you will be required to withdraw from your programme of study if they are not achieved, regardless of your progress in other areas.

You are required to engage with, record your progress, and submit for assessed milestones such as Project Approval and Confirmation of Route on [GradBook](#), which is the University's online platform for PGR monitoring and progression.

3.2. Conditions

3.2.1. Leave

Full-time research degree students are entitled to 8 weeks leave per year, including public holidays and periods when the University is closed. Leave should be recorded in GradBook. Public holidays and University closure days are mandatory holidays and so there is no requirement to book those days off. Part-time and writing up students are entitled to pro-rata number of days based on 0.5 FTE and 0.1 FTE respectively. You need to agree periods of annual leave with your supervisory team; students on a Tier 4/Student visa must request and record this on [GradBook](#).

3.2.2. Working Hours

Full-time students are expected to devote 37 hours per week to their studies. Part-time students are expected to devote 18.5 hours per week on average to their studies. You are expected to submit your thesis prior to the end of your 'writing up' period (or the end of your registration period if you don't have a writing up phase in your registration), which is the final deadline for your thesis, and to negotiate your commitment accordingly. Some funders may stipulate that you submit at the end of the funding period.

3.2.3. Student/Tier 4 visa holders

If you are an overseas student on a Student/Tier 4 General Student visa, you must fulfil and adhere to the regulations given by the UK Visa and Immigration (UKVI) office and document regular (monthly) interactions with your supervisors on [GradBook](#).

You are also obliged to comply with your responsibilities with the University as a Student/Tier 4 General Student visa-holder, as outlined in the relevant web pages of the [International Students Advice \(ISA\)](#) and those for current students of the [UKVI Compliance Team](#). Please remember to contact the [Doctoral College](#) if you need to renew your visa at least 1 month prior to the expire date of your visa!

The University's Equality & Diversity and related policies are available from the main [Student regulations, policies and procedures](#) webpage.

4. Enrolment

Postgraduate research (PGR) students are recorded in the University student records system (UNIT-e).

You are required to be enrolled by your first day of study for a research degree and not later than two weeks from your start date. You should contact the [Doctoral College](#) for details of when and where enrolment will take place if you have not received information by email. Online enrolment is possible for most research students.

At enrolment you will normally be required to have provided the following:

- confirmation of sponsorship arrangements or confirmation that payment for fees has been made (the [Student Accounts Team](#) or the [Doctoral College](#) should be contacted if you or your sponsors have any questions concerning the payment of fees),
- for international students based at Plymouth (except Irish, Isle of Man or Channel Islands nationals) you must have undertaken the Right to Study (RTS) checks,
- for international students not based at Plymouth (except Irish, Isle of Man or Channel Islands nationals), you must have undertaken the RTS check each time your visit the University of Plymouth,

You will normally receive an ID/student card at initial enrolment only - this card enables you to access the library, Students' Union, and certain buildings and offices and sports facilities (after payment of a joining fee where appropriate).

If you have been appointed to work on a project conceived by the University which forms all or part of your research degree programme, and you have been funded by the University (e.g., through a studentship), you may be required to assign any IP (Intellectual Property) Rights to the University or to an external partner. In such cases, you will need to sign an IP Agreement with the University (and/or the partner organisation) prior to enrolling on your programme of study (or as soon as possible thereafter). Please see the University's [Intellectual Property Policy](#) for further details and contact your Director of Studies and/or School PGR Coordinator at the earliest opportunity to discuss.

You must re-enrol every academic year for the duration of your programme of study. You are not entitled to re-enrol unless the prescribed fees for the previous academic year or any other outstanding academic related debt with the University have been paid.

If you have not enrolled for the current academic year, and have not applied for a formal interruption, approved by the Doctoral College Board, your registration will be terminated and your status will be recorded as withdrawn.

The University will always try to contact you before terminating your registration. It is your responsibility to notify the University of any change to your contact details.

5. Induction

University-wide Induction events (either in person, online or a combination) will be run three times a year by the Doctoral College for all research degree candidates. A recording of sessions will be made available for those unable to attend in person.

Attending a University Induction Event is **mandatory** for PGR students. You will be unable to start your Project Approval (RDC.1) until you have completed one of the following: attended an Induction event, attended an online induction webinar or viewed the recorded online induction and passed a short quiz.

If you are enrolled on a Professional Doctorate degree, you will be invited to the University-wide induction once you start your research phase. For Professional Doctorates, the Project Approval (RDC.1) equivalent is passed through one of the taught modules in the taught phase of the degree.

Your School or Faculty will also provide you with essential and useful information. This will vary according to local procedures but will normally be provided through an induction workshop, event or programme, as well as a supplement to this handbook.

Induction events aim to ensure that you are:

- informed of the local research degree management structure, staff and procedures, the formal and informal channels of communication at local and University level,
- introduced to the library, computing, facilities, resources and services available to you,
- made aware of your responsibilities as a research degree candidate and the responsibilities of your supervisors to you,
- informed of the purposes, roles and responsibilities of the Doctoral College,
- introduced to the extent of research training available and/or required,
- informed of University health and safety procedures (where appropriate, specific local guidelines will be provided and you may be required to sign a statement to confirm that you have read and agree to these procedures),
- informed of the University research ethics and integrity policy, particularly in those areas where research involves human and/or animal participants,
- informed of the University policy on ownership of copyright of theses and intellectual property rights arising from your work,
- made fully aware of the timescale for completion of your research degree including the normal minimum and maximum periods for registration, the liability of payment of fees and the structure of amount of fees to be paid,
- informed of normal expectations for progress, probationary periods and the Annual Monitoring process,

- informed of the systems and procedures in place to monitor the use of the electronic system for research degree students ([GradBook](#)), how to view and record your progress, and of your responsibilities,
- informed of pastoral support, health & wellbeing and counselling services available and encouraged to make use of the support network for personal and work-related matters when needed, and
- made aware of opportunities to voice views and input into local and university-level decision-making.

6. Your responsibilities

As a research student, you are expected to:

- contribute positively to the development and maintenance of an effective working relationship with your Director of Studies and other supervisors,
- pursue your research project with a commitment, taking full advantage of the resources and facilities offered,
- maintain a record of the minimum number of formal supervisory sessions each year on, and upload documents as required to, [GradBook](#),
- submit written or creative research work to your supervisory team regularly and provide oral presentations of work in seminars, as required,
- agree a schedule of regular meetings with your supervisors, meeting the minimum number required for your programme of study,
- take initiative in raising awareness of circumstances or concerns that may affect your work,
- maintain progress in accordance with the schedule agreed your supervisors,
- engage in self-assessment of personal and professional skills development and appropriate skills training, ensuring that your supervisors are aware of areas where training may be necessary,
- provide an annual report of progress via [GradBook](#),
- negotiate with your Director of Studies the amount of time devoted to your research and the timing of vacations and leave of absence,
- make the ultimate decision to submit your thesis (while your Director of Studies's advice should be taken as to when the thesis is ready for submission, this cannot be taken as a guarantee that the examiners will find the thesis acceptable for the award of a degree),
- be responsible for the preparation of your thesis and its submission and any corrections required post-examination and to ensure that the content is complete, accurate and your own work (except where clearly indicated),
- attend a mandatory Doctoral College Induction event, either in person or online, and complete the University's mandatory online Health & Safety training,
- ensure that the University has up-to-date contact details for you and that you regularly check your University email account for communications,
- adhere to the University's academic regulations and [ethical guidelines](#) and codes of good practice, as well as complying with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR),

- enrol every year and to ensure that all tuition and bench fees are paid, as appropriate, and
- adhere to the commitments outlined in the [University's Student Charter](#) as appropriate.

All University researchers are expected to embrace the principles of open research to demonstrate the value, rigour and impact of your work. This means that you are encouraged to make your research data openly available for reuse at the end of your project, within legal and ethical constraints and dependent on its context (e.g. as part of a funded ongoing project). Additional information can be found via the University's [Research Support website](#), the Library's guide on [Open Research](#) or by contacting the [Open Research Team](#). By practicing open research, you can

The University has produced [Open Access and Research Data Guidelines for PGR Students](#) which aim to clarify its expectations with regards to open access research and Research Data Management (RDM). The University's Open Research Team also runs sessions for PGRs as part of the [Researcher Development Programme](#).

You are responsible for exercising good practice in research data management. All PGR students not in a Professional Doctorate are required to submit a Data Management Plan as part of the Project Approval (RDC.1) process. PGRs who are submitting applications for ethical approval, will also require Data Management Plans.

All postgraduate researchers are required to adhere to the University's [Code of Good Research Practice](#). You can read more about the University's ethical approval processes as well as information about each Faculty Research Ethics & Integrity Committee on the [Research Ethics Policy](#) webpages.

You are expected to work with your supervisory team to apply for ethical approval for your project at the earliest opportunity. Your application must be approved by your Director of Studies prior to submission.

We very much value your contribution to the University's research culture and urge you involve yourself in our research life by, for example, attending research seminars, workshops, conferences and lectures.

A guide to [what is on](#) at the University of Plymouth is updated regularly. If you would like to organise a research event, please let us know at [Research Skills](#) and we'll do our best to help.

7. Registration period

The first six months of registration for full-time students and 12 months for part-time students are considered a probationary period and registration may be terminated by the University if you do not make sufficient progress during this time (normally indicated by not successfully completing the Project Approval RDC.1 milestone). Professional Doctorate students are excluded from the above and would follow taught programmes progression rules during your taught phase.

7.1. Periods of registration

The normal maximum and minimum periods of supervised study and registration prior to submission of a thesis for examination are:

Registration type	Mode of attendance	Minimum	Maximum
ResM	full-time	12 months (1 year)	18 months (1.5 years)
	part-time	24 months (2 years)	36 months (3 years)
MPhil	full-time	12 months (1 year)	36 months (3 years)
	part-time	24 months (2 years)	Programme start date prior to 1 st August 2024: 48 months (4 years) Programme start date on or after 1 st August 2024: 72 months (6 years)
	full-time	24 months (2 years)	48 months (4 years)

Registration type	Mode of attendance	Minimum	Maximum
PhD (including from first enrolment if transferred from MPhil or ResM if relevant)	part-time	36 months (3 years)	Programme start date prior to 1 st August 2024: 72 months (6 years) Programme start date on or after 1 st August 2024: 96 months (8 years)
MD	full-time	12 months (1 year)	36 months (3 years)
	part-time	24 months (2 years)	Programme start date prior to 1 st August 2024: 48 months (4 years) Programme start date on or after 1 st August 2024: 72 months (6 years)
Professional Doctorates (excludes repeat years during taught phase)	full-time	12 months (1 year) from commencement of the research phase	Programme start date prior to 1 st August 2024: 48 months (4 years)
	part-time	24 months (2 years) from commencement of the research phase	72 months (6 years) EdD start prior to 1 st January 2024: 84 months (7 years)

Registration type	Mode of attendance	Minimum	Maximum
PhD on the Basis of Prior Published Works	part-time	n/a	12 months (1 year)

Your thesis (or its written element if your thesis also includes creative or professional practice) must be submitted for examination before the end of the maximum periods of registration outlined above. If you wish to submit your thesis earlier than the minimum registration period indicated above, you will need to obtain prior approval for an exemption to the minimum period from the Doctoral College Board. Additionally, you will have to pay fees up to the minimum registration period.

The Doctoral College Board may allow a candidate who has started a programme of study and research at another university to complete it as a registered candidate of the University of Plymouth. In such cases, the Doctoral College Board shall decide the minimum and maximum periods of registration on a case by case basis in consultation with your previous institution.

7.2. Amendments to registration (mode of study)

If you wish to change your mode of study (that is, from full-time to part-time or *vice versa*), this request must be made via [GradBook](#).

As the maximum period of study varies according to mode of study and your award aim, your total remaining registration period and tuition fee status will therefore be affected by any such changes. These will be recalculated by the University.

Requests for changes must be approved by your School and then the Doctoral College Board.

The University is obliged to follow the guidelines issued by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) when dealing with withdrawals of overseas students under a Student/Tier 4 General Student visa.

You are not allowed to change your mode of study once you have entered your 'writing up' period.

7.3. Amendments to registration (from PhD to MPhil or from a longer degree to a shorter one)

In some circumstances, you may consider changing your registration from a longer research degree to a shorter one, the most common of these being a transfer from PhD to MPhil registration. If you find yourself in this situation, please contact the [Doctoral College](#) as soon as possible to discuss what options are available to you.

Any requests will require the support of your supervisory team and your School. Please note that there may be some constraints, such as requirements from sponsors, for example.

If the transfer from PhD to MPhil occurs prior to the final outcome of the Confirmation of Route (RDC.2), your registration will be amended to an MPhil programme and all deadlines adjusted as if MPhil from the start of your degree.

Any changes post-RDC.2 will be looked into on a case-by-case basis and we will do our best to try and make sure you are not penalised for these changes.

The University is obliged to follow the guidelines issued by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) when dealing with any changes of registration for overseas students under a Student/Tier 4 General Student visa.

7.4. Withdrawal from registration

If you decide to withdraw from your programme of study, then you should notify the University of the reason for withdrawal and date of departure preferably via [GradBook](#). Your withdrawal will be reported to the Doctoral College Board.

If you do not do this via [GradBook](#), then written confirmation must be sent to the Doctoral College as soon as possible to ensure that your enrolment and registration are cancelled and you are no longer liable for fees.

Please refer to the [Fees Policy](#) for further information.

The University is obliged to follow the guidelines issued by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) when dealing with withdrawals of overseas students under a Student/Tier 4 General Student visa.

7.5. Termination of registration

The University reserves the right to terminate your registration if:

- it is determined that it has discharged all its responsibilities towards you, and
- you have received adequate and formal written warning of inadequate progress, have not improved within a reasonable time period and show no likelihood of improvement, or
- you have not achieved mandatory milestones, passed compulsory taught elements within specified timeframes or numbers of attempts, or
- it is demonstrated that you have committed an academic offence or research misconduct, or
- you have not kept in contact with the University, or
- you fail to enrol for the current academic year without a formal agreed interruption.

Please also see 'Lack of Academic progress' or 'Loss of contact' in section '13. Monitoring of progress' of this Handbook.

8. Interruptions, absences (compassionate leave), extensions

8.1. Interruption to registration

Where you can show good reason for not making progress with your research programme, you may apply via [GradBook](#) to have your registration interrupted for a period of not normally less than one month and not more than 12 months. In exceptional circumstances, you may renew the interruption of registration, for a maximum further period(s) of 12 months maximum.

The period by which the total registration of a student may be extended (including all extensions and interruptions granted) will not normally exceed a total of 24 months.

Interruptions of registration are usually requested as a result of illness, maternity/paternity leave, severe personal problems or commitments unrelated to the research project, but not for trivial matters.

Approval by your School and by the Doctoral College Board is required. Periods of interruption shall not count towards the maximum period of registration.

Please refer to the [Fees Policy](#). You should then pay any remaining amount owed as soon as possible. The Student Accounts team will contact you if you have not done so. If you have overpaid your fees the surplus funds can either be retained and applied to your fees on resumption of your studies or refunded to you at your request. Please note that students will not be reimbursed for fees paid prior to the current year of registration. Please email the [Student Accounts Team](#) if you require a refund.

The University is obliged to follow the guidelines issued by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) when dealing with requests for interruptions from overseas students under a Student/Tier 4 General Student visa. Information on immigration and visas is available in the [International student advice](#) page.

During the period of interruption, the University has the right to suspend access to laboratories, Student Services, office or other workspace and to the library since you may no longer be covered by the University's insurance. However, the University will normally attempt to keep access to the library and on-line accounts live during the period of interruption.

During a period of interruption, your supervisory team is not obliged to engage with you about the progress of your project, although it is recommended that 'keeping in touch' meetings are held every 3 months during a period of interruption of 4 months or more, either in person or by video conference. Please note that this is not intended to discuss or further the *content* of your research project.

Retrospective interruptions with a start date more than 2 months from date of request are not normally allowed; you and/or your Director of Studies are encouraged to raise these requests at the time of the events happening whenever possible.

Immediately following an interruption of 6 months or longer, you should have a 're-integration' meeting with your Director of Studies to recalibrate your project, schedule of work and your support needs.

8.2. Extension to registration

In exceptional cases, and on the recommendation of your Director of Studies (or other nominated supervisor), your registration may be extended by the Doctoral College Board. Applications must be made via [GradBook](#).

If you submit your thesis after your deadline, you will be responsible for paying extension fees at the appropriate level (See below, as well as the [Fees Policy](#)).

Extensions may be granted for a maximum of 12 months at any one time. Thereafter, you may apply to extend your registration for a maximum period of 24 months in total. Please note that you are only able to have a maximum period of interruptions and extensions of 24 months for your programme of study in total, although this may be greater if demonstrably due to the impact of Covid-19.

If your maximum period of registration has ended, and you have not been granted a further extension, your registration may be deemed by the Doctoral College Board to have lapsed and, as a result, you will be withdrawn from your programme of study.

8.3. Compassionate Leave

Postgraduate research students are entitled to up to two weeks compassionate leave if they suffer a bereavement of a close family member, child or dependent or if a close family member, child or dependent is diagnosed with a terminal or serious illness. This should be completed as an interruption in GradBook. If this cannot be completed at the time, you can request a retrospective interruption up to two months after the interruption started. Compassionate leave may be funded or unfunded: please check your funder's policy on this matter. If you need to interrupt beyond the initial two weeks, you should discuss this with your Director of Studies and complete an interruption request on GradBook, which can also be requested retrospectively up to two months later. Again, the funding of interruptions will depend on your funder's policy. You are advised to visit Student Services for support if you are experiencing a bereavement or difficult personal circumstances.

9. Fee paying structure

The fee you are responsible for paying depends on your year of registration and mode of attendance (full-time or part-time), according to the table below:

Mode of attendance	PhD	MPhil	ResM	MD
Full-time	3 years FT fees	2 years FT fees	1 year FT fees	2 years FT fees
	Plus 1 year of writing up (reduced fee)	Plus 1 year of writing up (reduced fee)	Plus 0.5 years of writing up (reduced fee)	Plus 1 year of writing up (reduced fee)
Part-time start date prior to 1st August 2024	4 years PT fees	3 years PT fees	2 years PT fees	3 years PT fees
	Plus 2 years of writing up (reduced fee)	Plus 1 year of writing up (reduced fee)	Plus 1 year of writing up (reduced fee)	Plus 1 year of writing up (reduced fee)
Part-time start date on or after 1st August 2024	6 years PT fees	4 years PT fees	2 years PT fees	4 years PT fees
	Plus 2 years of writing up (reduced fee)	Plus 2 years of writing up (reduced fee)	Plus 1 year of writing up (reduced fee)	Plus 2 years of writing up (reduced fee)

Mode of attendance	DBA	EdD (start date prior to 1 st August 2024)	EdD (start date on or after 1 st August 2024)	EngD
Full-time	n/a	n/a	n/a	1 year FT fees (taught phase)
				3 years FT fees (research phase)
Part-time (excludes repeat years during taught phase)	2 years PT fees (taught phase)	3 years PT fees (taught phase)	2 years PT fees (taught phase)	n/a
	3 years PT fees (research phase)	2 years PT fees (research phase)	3 years PT fees (research phase)	
	Plus 1 year of	Plus 2 years	Plus 1 year of	

	writing up (reduced fee)	of writing up (reduced fee)	writing up (reduced fee)	
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If you are sponsored and your sponsorship covers periods longer than those in the table above, these may be adjusted to coincide with your sponsorship details.

Please also refer to the [Fees Policy](#) for further information. The Student Accounts team will contact you if you have any outstanding debt. Further information on standard tuition fees is available at the [Fees and Funding](#) webpage.

If you need to resubmit your thesis for a second examination following your *viva voce* examination, you will need to pay a Resubmission Fee upon re-submission of your thesis, whether or not a second oral examination is waived.

If you are in receipt of a University Research Studentship (URS), information about payments during Maternity, Adoption, Ordinary Paternity, Shared Parental Leave and other interruptions to study (including illness), can be found in the 'University Research Studentship Guidelines' on [the Postgraduate research studentships page](#).

10. Project Approval (RDC.1)

Project Approval stage is compulsory if you are registered for the degrees of MPhil, PhD, ResM or MD. You must have completed a mandatory induction prior to submitting for this milestone. Professional Doctorate students pass this milestone during the taught phase of the degree.

As part of this process, you must do the following via [GradBook](#):

- complete the Project Approval (RDC.1) on-line form; this includes an abstract of your project and details of training completed and forthcoming,
- submit a schedule of work leading to the submission of your thesis,
- submit a Research Data Management Plan, and
- submit any other materials specified by your School or Faculty (in Faculty supplements to the Research Degrees Handbook).

It is recommended that the 'description of project' includes:

- a rationale or context for your work;
- references to key literature;
- aims and objectives;
- a proposed methodology.

Your project is reviewed by an 'expert commentator' from outside of your supervisory team and may include a discussion with you about your project. The assessment of your RDC.1 includes:

- consideration of the academic content and quality of your proposed programme of work to ensure that it is set at the appropriate level and achievable within the limits of the research programme and according to the submitted schedule of work,
- consideration of whether your Data Management Plan is realistic and appropriate to your project and adheres to [ethical and legal guidelines](#),
- consideration of the appropriate level of study and programme and thus the route of study and qualification aim,
- consideration of the availability of project resources, research training, and supervision for the duration of your programme,
- consideration of the extent of the relationship with any collaborating establishment and the protection of intellectual property rights and copyright of the final thesis,
- consideration of your qualifications/experience and potential to fulfil your proposed project,

- assurance that you and your proposed research degree project meet the requirements of the University Regulations,
- approval of any request for collaborative submission of final thesis materials (including practice), and
- ethical considerations and/or approval if appropriate and not considered before.

You must submit the materials listed above for Project Approval via [GradBook](#) by not earlier than 3 months and not later than 5 months from your official start date if you are a full-time student. If you are a part-time student, this must occur not earlier than 6 months and not later than 10 months from your official start date. These periods will be extended by approved periods of interruption.

If you are not able to submit your Project Approval materials by the dates above, for personal reasons beyond your control, then you should follow the [Extenuating Circumstances](#) process to request an extension to your deadline. Extensions following an approved request via the Extenuating Circumstances will be granted for a maximum of 1 month for full-time students and 2 months for part-time students.

Your Director of Studies can submit a request for an extension to the above deadlines for methodological reasons. This request must be made prior to the original deadline and it must be approved at either School or Faculty level (depending on local processes and procedures as per their supplementary handbook) with all requests and decisions uploaded to your [GradBook](#) page. Extensions to the submission for the Project Approval for methodological reasons will be granted by not more than 1 month for full-time students and 2 months for part-time students.

If your Data Management Plan (DMP) does not meet the requirements to pass but the rest of your Project Approval application is satisfactory, then your project may be still approved with a note from your supervisor or expert commentator on GradBook stating that it requires further development and/or amendments which will be monitored.

If your project is not approved at first attempt (including non-submission by the deadline without an approved extension), you are allowed a second attempt. The deadline for submission for the second attempt will be 3 months from the official notification, via [GradBook](#), of not having succeeded in the first attempt. If you have not completed a mandatory induction, then you will not be able to submit your Project Approval materials on GradBook. If this is the case and your deadline passes, it will be considered an 'attempt' and you will be deemed to have failed this milestone.

If you do not successfully complete Project Approval within a) two attempts, or else b) within 9 months full-time or 15 months part-time (whichever is longest), you will be required to withdraw from your programme, unless you have valid Extenuating Circumstances or your submission is under consideration for approval.

11. Confirmation of Route (RDC.2)

If you are registered as a PhD student, the Confirmation of Route process is compulsory.

Transfer to PhD status via this process is also possible from the following research degree registrations: ResM, MD and MPhil. In these cases, the transfer to a PhD programme is retrospective to your date of initial registration. Faculties/Academic units may have additional discipline specific requirements which students must fulfil in order to be eligible to transfer to a PhD programme (for example, a minimum grade average for mandatory taught modules) in addition to passing the Confirmation of Route assessment.

The following outcomes are possible:

- MPhil, ResM and MD students who successfully complete this process will be transferred to a PhD programme. The transfer to PhD is retrospective to your date of initial registration.
- If you are a MPhil, ResM or MD student who does not pass or successfully complete this process, you will remain on the programme for which you originally registered.
- A PhD student who successfully completes this process on either the first or second attempt will remain on a PhD award route.
- A PhD student who does not pass or successfully complete this process on their second attempt will either be transferred to a MPhil route or will be withdrawn from a research degree programme.

The Confirmation of Route process is:

- a significant milestone toward your final doctoral level award,
- a gauge of your current level of progress and
- a check that you are on target for successful completion, and an important stage in the written development of your final thesis.

You must complete the Confirmation of Route (RDC.2) by completing the on-line form and uploading a written report via [GradBook](#), which summarises progress to date and plans for the future.

This report should be between 10,000 – 12,000 words in length but may vary according to discipline-specific requirements, which will be published in School supplements to this [e-Handbook](#).

The report should cover the following points. We strongly recommend using sub-headings to highlight how you have addressed these:

- **Introduction:** that provides a context and rationale for the research,

- **Literature review:** critical and/or systematic review of recent, relevant work in the field(s),
- **Aims and objectives:** up-to-date statements of research aims and questions,
- **Methodology:** a statement or description of methodology and/or project design, including discussion of how it has been applied to generate findings or outcomes to date,
- **Results and discussion:** findings and research outcomes to date, discussion and reflection on progress,
- **Statement of originality and contribution to knowledge:** identification of the originality, insights and/or significant contribution to knowledge that the project will make by the time the PhD thesis is submitted,
- **Plan of research:** an up-to-date plan of research, including a timetable/schedule of work, leading to submission of the thesis,
- **Data Management Plan:** a statement about the status of the Data Management Plan (including ownership, location and storage of data), any relevant ethics approvals, copyright, collaboration and/or intellectual property rights/agreements,
- **Publications:** (if applicable), a plan setting out the publications expected to be produced during the registration period and/or included within the thesis,
- **Practice (if relevant):** in the case of practice-research projects within creative arts disciplines, an explanation of the integrated format of the thesis,
- any other materials including appendixes or processes specified by Faculties, Schools or Academic Units (in [supplements](#) to the Research Degrees Handbook).

You may also use published outputs, such as journal articles, in lieu of these sections. You will also be asked to summarise the training you have undertaken to date.

Your Confirmation of Route submission will be assessed by a panel comprising three individuals. Of these, at least one person will be a member of the supervisory team and at least one will be outside your supervisory team but usually a UoP member of staff.

All panellists must be researchers who are able to comment on the appropriateness of the methodology and levels of progress to date within the context, expectations and assessment criteria of a PhD programme.

The Panel will be chaired by one of the panel members who is outside your supervisory team and who also contributes to the assessment of the submission.

The composition of the Panel, including the identification of the Chair, will be determined by your Director of Studies (who may be a member of the Panel). It is recommended that the composition of the panel takes into account any protected characteristics to ensure that it provides an inclusive environment.

The Panel will hold a meeting with you (either face to face or online) to discuss the RDC.2. It is recommended that this meeting mirrors the format of a *viva voce* examination; with the candidate responding to questions from panellists about their work. This should be conducted in a supportive and constructive way that provides you with experience of a *viva voce* examination and helpful feedback about your progress. The University has a fit-to-sit policy ([Student regulations, policies and procedures](#)). If there are good reasons why you cannot attend your oral examination (e.g., sickness), you should contact your Director of Studies and ask for the oral examination to be re-scheduled. Similarly, if any of the examining team are unable to attend for good reason (e.g., illness) then the examination will need to be rescheduled. If this is the case, we will try to give you as much notice as possible in the circumstances.

In assessing the outcome of the Confirmation of Route process, the following is taken into consideration:

- evidence that you have made satisfactory progress in your research programme to date;
- issues related to data management/data security, collaboration, ethical protocol, copyright and intellectual property rights (as relevant); and
- evidence that your research and methodology provides the basis for a PhD.

You are required to submit the materials listed above by not earlier than 12 months and not later than 15 if you are a full-time student, and not earlier than 18 months and not later than 21 months if you are a part-time student.

If, for personal reasons beyond your control, you are not able to submit for Confirmation of Route via [GradBook](#) by the dates above, you should follow the [Extenuating Circumstances](#) process to request an extension to your deadline. Extensions following an approved request via the Extenuating Circumstances will be granted for a maximum of 3 months for both full-time and part-time students.

Your Director of Studies can submit a request for an extension to the above deadlines for methodological reasons. This request must be made prior to your deadline and it must be approved at either School or Faculty level (depending on local processes and procedures as per their supplementary handbook). Extensions to the submission of the Confirmation of Route for methodological reasons will be granted by not more than 3 months for full-time and part-time students.

If you do not succeed at your first attempt, you are allowed a second attempt. The deadline for submission for your second attempt will be 3 months from the official notification, via [GradBook](#), of the outcome in the first attempt. If you do not submit by your deadline, this will be considered an 'attempt' unless Extenuating Circumstances have been granted.

You may choose to submit your thesis for a lower award than that for which you are registered (for example, a PhD candidate may submit their thesis for a MPhil); this decision does not have to be made until submission of the Nomination of Examiners (RDC.3) form by your Director of Studies. Examiners may also choose to award a degree at a higher level than that for which you have submitted, although this is a rare occurrence. The passing of the Confirmation of Route assessment does not confer either a masters level degree or the completion of equivalent credit-bearing modules. Nor is it a guarantee that you will eventually be awarded a research degree.

12. Research Training

The University aims to:

- provide high quality and professional training in research and other skills that lead to career development, tailored to the individual needs and aspirations of each research candidate;
- supply this training partly through the individual attention of a well-trained, professional Director of Studies and supervisory team, who will meet regularly with the candidate at agreed times and for set periods in an atmosphere of support, encouragement, constructive criticism and debate;
- provide access to a selection of short training workshops and courses, comprising both specialist and non-specialist topics;
- support students and supervisor(s) through clear and established processes and expectations for regular monitoring, reporting, feedback and peer review of the candidate's progress;
- provide adequate opportunity for regular presentations by research degree candidates to a range of audiences within the University; and
- support attendance and delivery of research results by candidates at appropriate external venues e.g. via conference attendance.

The Doctoral College's [Researcher Development Programme](#) offers over 150 sessions each year to help you develop and broaden your research and transferable skills. These include both classroom sessions and webinars. They are listed on the [Researcher Development Programme](#) webpages (which are updated regularly) and are categorised according to Vitae's [Researcher Development Framework](#). The framework is structured in four domains, which encompass what researchers need to know to do research, how to be effective in their approach to research, when working with others, and in contributing to the wider environment. We recommend you attend up to ten days of development activities during each academic year.

Many resources related to the [University's Researcher Development Programme](#) are available on our [Researcher Development Programme Moodle page](#). These include videos of webinars and session handouts, Library and Induction information and more. To access these resources you can self-enrol on Moodle using your University of Plymouth email address or send an email to [Research Skills](#).

Due to the diverse research training requirements of the University's PGR students, Faculties and Schools are expected to identify and deliver appropriate discipline-specific training and career development opportunities in addition to those offered by the Doctoral College through its [Researcher Development Programme](#).

If you are required to complete any compulsory individual training, this will be confirmed to you prior to enrolment or soon after at the beginning of your programme of study. If your offer letter indicates that you must pass a module (or a compulsory module is mentioned in the Programme page) or complete a specific type of training (including those related to English language skills), then this is a mandatory requirement of your programme of study and you will not be allowed to progress or be awarded a degree without its successful completion. There is no 'compensation' available for taught modules for PGR programmes.

If you are registered for a PhD, ResM or MD, you may complete further credits at the University, beyond any specified compulsory requirement, up to a total maximum of 120 credits per year (these can include up to 30 credits of level 6 modules). These optional credits are determined by you and your supervisor depending on your previous experience and the needs of your proposed research project element. They may be chosen from a variety of existing taught programmes and can span disciplines. In some cases, it may also be possible to register on an 'attendance only' basis. Please note that registration on optional modules is subject to the approval of your DoS, the availability of these modules and at the discretion of the module leader.

Regulations related to Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) are available in 'Section A – Admissions' which can be downloaded from the [Student regulations, policies and procedures](#) page.

We also encourage you to immerse yourself in the University's research culture by participating in seminars, lectures, conferences and workshops inside and outside the institution. If you have ideas for training, please let us know by emailing [Research Skills](#). Course and training run by the [National Centre for Research Methods](#) may also be useful.

13. Monitoring of progress

If you are a full-time student, a minimum of 4 meetings must be held with your supervisory team each year (3 times per year, if you are a part-time student), with documentation and outcomes of these meetings recorded in [GradBook](#). You are expected to work together with your Director of Studies to maintain and complete these mandatory interactions on [GradBook](#). Both you and your Director of Studies are required to complete Annual Monitoring forms, via [GradBook](#), up to the point of completion of your degree.

Schools are responsible for monitoring and reviewing the progress of all research students towards their award aim.

13.1. Lack of academic progress

If you fail to make satisfactory progress in your programme of study, your School may recommend to the Doctoral College Board that your registration should be terminated. As part of this process, the University is committed to:

- ensuring that you are offered the opportunity to demonstrate progression,
- dealing with the matter in a sensitive manner,
- providing the opportunity for both you and your supervisors to report separately and in confidence, and
- where necessary, assisting you and your supervision team to bring the programme back on schedule at the earliest opportunity.

The University reserves the right to terminate the registration of a research student in the case of persistent unacceptable progress. Please also see 'Termination of Registration' in the section "Registration Period". You will not be required to withdraw from the University without having first received a formal written warning.

Where appropriate, the [University Support for Study](#) policy will be followed.

13.2. Lack of contact

If your supervisory team identifies that they have lost contact or you have failed to keep in contact, they should contact the School PGR Coordinator, who will work together with them and Doctoral College to make every effort to:

- contact you,
- identify any obstacles to your progress,
- agree a plan for improvement, and
- continue to monitor and review the plan.

Following failure to re-establish contact, and after informal attempts to establish contact, you will be issued with a formal written warning that registration will be terminated unless you re-establishes contact with your Director of Studies or other supervisor within an appropriate period and continue to progress in your studies.

In the event of failure to do, your School may recommend to the Doctoral College Board that your registration should be terminated. As part of this process, the University is committed to:

- ensuring that you are offered the opportunity to contact your supervisors and demonstrate progression,
- dealing with the matter in a sensitive manner,
- providing the opportunity for both you and your supervisors to address any issues in confidence, and
- where necessary, assisting you and your supervision team to bring you back to your degree and agree a schedule of work at the earliest opportunity.

The University reserves the right to terminate the registration of a research student in the case of persistent lack of contact. Please also see 'Termination of Registration' in the section "Registration Period". You will not be required to withdraw from the University without having first received a formal written warning.

Where appropriate, the [University Support for Study](#) policy will be followed.

14. Amendments, changes and transfers

If there is a change to your source of funding, please report this by email to [Doctoral College](#) so your records can be updated.

If there is a need to change the members of your supervisory team (or an individual's role on your team), this must be done via [GradBook](#) by a current supervisor and approved by your School PGR Coordinator on behalf of your Head of School. If your new Director of Studies is in a different school from your previous one, you will need to transfer to a programme in the School in which your new DoS is located; the new School will be responsible for your progress and resourcing your project and you will be subject to its local processes and expectations.

If, due to a change in circumstances, e.g. redeployment of your supervisor, you wish to transfer registration to another institution, the University has the right to refuse and, in such a case, an explanation will be offered. This is likely to have to do with Intellectual Property Rights.

If an external candidate wishes to transfer to University of Plymouth, the institution from which they are transferring must provide written confirmation that they are willing to accept the transfer of the registration for the candidate.

For information on changes of mode of attendance, please refer to section 7.

Registration period - Amendments to registration (mode of study) in this Handbook.

The University is obliged to follow the guidelines issued by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) when dealing with transfers between institutions for overseas students under a Student/Tier 4 General Student visa.

15. Your thesis

Your thesis as a whole must be framed as a single coherent research project and meet the [Office for Students' Sector-recognised standards](#) at Level 7 (Masters) or Level 8 (Doctoral) as appropriate to the degree.

Normally, the main text of your thesis should not exceed the following limits (excluding ancillary data, appendices, bibliography, tables and figures):

- for ResM: 25,000 words
- for MD: 60,000 words
- for MPhil: 40,000 words
- for PhD: 80,000 words
- for Professional Doctorates:
 - EdD: 50,000 words
 - DBA & DPA: 45,000 words
 - EngD: 50,000 words

Note that these are maximums! You should write succinctly and concisely. If your thesis exceeds these limits (perhaps because it contains qualitative primary data) your DoS should confirm with your examiners that they are willing to read it and provide evidence of this to the Doctoral College.

You may also include journal articles, book chapters or other written outputs (not including slides from verbal presentations) that have been published during the course of the degree registration. This can include work that has been accepted for publication but has not yet been published. Published outputs may form part of your thesis submission and can be included in lieu of a chapter or chapters. As such, they will be examined as part of your thesis.

Your thesis may include non-written forms of research (e.g. creative or professional practice). In all cases:

- examiners should be made aware of the format of your thesis prior to their nomination as your examiner. This must be sent to your examiners by your DoS prior to submission of RDC.3;
- it may be necessary for examiners to engage in some elements of the thesis (e.g. performance or exhibition) some time prior to the submission of the written element or the *viva voce* examination. Please note that examiners may not discuss this work with you – except in general and non-critical ways which do not represent formative feedback – prior to the *viva voce* examination meeting;

- where elements of the thesis are co-authored and/or co-produced (such as published papers), your specific role within these elements must be clearly indicated in your thesis. Your examiners will consider whether 'they are satisfied that the thesis is the candidate's own work' and therefore it might be expected that you are the primary, or one of the lead authors, of any papers included for examination.

You must also make clear how any published papers or non-written forms of research (such as creative practice) contribute to your overarching thesis. This might be achieved with an introduction (that positions your work in a wider body of knowledge and outlines research aims, enquiry, methodology and how your papers/practice contributes to the overall narrative of the thesis) and conclusion (including a clear statement of the contribution to knowledge, in the case of a doctorate) and/or by commentaries in the thesis that link this work together.

It is only possible to include Open Access publications or 'green' versions of articles or papers within theses for copyright reasons. Please refer to the [Open Access and Research Data Guidelines for Postgraduate Research \(PGR\) Students](#). Please note that published material in thesis does not have to be OA at submission stage but will need to be when the thesis is uploaded to PEARL. If this is not likely to be the case, the student and DoS should discuss way forward with the examiners; if necessary, the student may need to revise elements of the thesis as corrections in order to comply with copyright requirements.

Further guidance on publication in lieu of chapters can be found in on the [Publication in Lieu of Chapters](#) page.

Your thesis must be written in English. Any exception to this condition must be sought in writing to the Doctoral College Board prior to submitting the thesis for examination.

The University accepts that some postgraduate research students may wish to have their work proofread by a third-party (that is, neither the student nor a member of their supervisory team) prior to submission and examination.

If this is the case, then such a process may not compromise the authorship of the submitted work – for example, there may be no factual changes or additions or amendments to the argument.

The use of a proof-reader must be acknowledged in the thesis. A copy of the thesis prior to proofreading must also be uploaded to the student's GradBook page, and made available to the examiners upon request, so it is possible to ascertain what changes were made.

In cases where changes to the thesis due to proofreading are so extensive that it can no longer be fairly said that the work is that of the student, or where the original version of the thesis is not made available upon request, then either academic offences procedures or PGR Student Research Misconduct procedures should be followed (as appropriate).

Papers that you have published during your research registration period but are not being included as examined elements of the thesis itself, should be listed either in the Author's Declaration or else in an Appendix at the end of the thesis, including their DOI.

The requirements and guidelines for the presentation of your thesis are detailed in the 'Thesis Presentation' section at the end of this Handbook. Citation practice should be agreed with your Director of Studies as appropriate for your discipline(s).

Where your thesis includes material other than that which is written or the research involves creative writing or the preparation of a scholarly edition, then the written contextual/critical element of thesis should normally be shorter than the above limits.

All theses that include practical outcomes must also include a written element which, in the case of a Doctorate level thesis, substantiates and contextualises its contribution to knowledge.

In the case of practice-research degrees, the examiners must approve the form and format of the thesis. Please see guidelines in the relevant Faculty/Programme Supplement for details of this process. The anticipated form of the final submission should have been outlined at Project Approval and/or Confirmation of Route stages and approved by the School/Faculty.

In agreeing to such a request, the candidate, the Director of Studies and the School/Faculty shall ensure that the proposed form and format of the thesis:

- will be legible and accessible to the examiners and peer community,
- will include a satisfactory record of the 'practice' element,
- is able to contextualise the practice intellectually,
- is able to clearly demonstrate its contribution to knowledge (in the case of a Doctorate),
- will be of a scale and form which can be reasonably stored in an electronic repository,
- will be archive stable for a reasonable length of time, and
- makes clear what is being examined.

You must include a statement at the front of your thesis with the word count of your thesis. It will not be accepted by the Doctoral College unless the word count is noted and is below the above limits. The only exceptions to this rule are if the longer word count has been agreed in writing by all the examiners prior to submission.

16.Submission of your thesis

You must submit your thesis by your deadline for examination via [GradBook](#).

Your thesis is your own work. Although it is always advisable to heed the guidance of your supervisory team, it is up to you to decide when you consider it is ready for submission. You will be required to submit a signed copy of the declaration of submission form (RDC.3S) with your thesis to certify that you are choosing to submit the thesis yourself.

Work submitted for a research degree at the University of Plymouth may not form part of any other degree you have undertaken at the University or at another establishment. Contravention of this condition will mean that your degree will be revoked by the University. Exceptions apply if you are studying as part of a collaborative arrangement with another institution and a joint or dual degree has been formally agreed between two higher education institutions.

You should not represent 'another person's work as your own, without acknowledging the source'. Your thesis should therefore be fully referenced. Advice about plagiarism and referencing is given in the University's [Plagiarism](#) pages.

You are required to submit your thesis (or any written elements of them, in the case of practice-research projects) in digital form, online.

At the same time, you must also submit an 'originality report' generated via Turnitin to check for Plagiarism. Guidance on how to use Turnitin can be found in the [Using Turnitin \(Help and Guidance\)](#) Moodle page.

You are strongly advised to check that you have submitted the correct version of your thesis. Your thesis cannot be amended or resubmitted once it has been submitted for assessment.

Please see the '17. Thesis Presentation' section in this Handbook for advice on formatting your thesis.

If there are any elements of your thesis that cannot be submitted electronically (e.g. an artist book, etc), this will need to be negotiated with your examiners via your Director of Studies. If you need to submit hard copies or physical materials, then one copy must be submitted for each examiner and (if appointed) the independent non-examining Chair.

The final title of your thesis needs to be indicated on the RDC.3 form that your Director of Studies submits to nominate your examination team to the University. If your examination team requests a change to your thesis title following your *viva voce* examination, no further approval is required and this will be part of your required corrections/amendments to your thesis.

17. Thesis presentation

Except with the formal permission of the Doctoral College Board, the thesis must be presented in English.

17.1. Format

Theses should be submitted electronically in digital form via [GradBook](#). You are strongly advised to check that you have submitted the correct version of your thesis. Your thesis cannot be amended or resubmitted once it has been submitted for assessment.

The form and format of thesis elements that cannot be submitted digitally need to be negotiated and agreed with your supervisors and your examination team. Should any of these require printing and binding, the University library offers a range of [services](#). Some of the guidelines below are only applicable in the case of hardcopy thesis.

Following examination, the University requires that the final approved thesis is submitted in digital form, which will need to be uploaded in the University electronic repository PEARL. The award will not be given until the electronic copy of the thesis has been submitted to the University repository, the submission has been approved by the Doctoral College and any outstanding academic related debts to the University have been paid.

Please note that some of the guidelines below would only apply to hardcopy theses.

17.1.1. Page Format

- Page size/type: A4 portrait; white or off-white
- Margins top/bottom: 20 mm
- Page numbering: Arabic numerals located bottom centre, in single sequence throughout, including pages that carry tables, figures, plates and appendices
- Chapter numbering: In sequence from start to finish of the thesis, not including Introduction and Conclusion
- Footnotes/endnotes: Single spaced
- Printing (if required): Double-sided (*i.e.* on both sides of the page)

17.1.2. Line Format

- Justification: Left compulsory; right optional
- Inside margin: 40 mm
- Outside margin: 20 mm
- Line length: 60 to 70 characters

- Spacing: Text in double spacing; indented quotations in single spacing

The font throughout the main body of the text should be size 12. Other smaller fonts may be used in page numbering, footnotes, footers and headers.

Alternative formats are possible but must be approved by their examiners. Students should discuss this with their Director of Studies in the first instance.

17.2. Contents

17.2.1. Sequence

- Copyright statement (*see below*)
- Title page (*see model that follows*)
- Acknowledgements
- Signed author's declaration including word count (*see model author's declaration that follows*)
- Abstract (including full name of candidate and title at the top)
- List of contents with page numbers
- List of tables, illustrations, etc. (if relevant)
- Text, divided into chapters, sections, etc.
- Bibliography/List of Sources
- List of publications produced during period of study with DOIs (if relevant and not listed on Author's Declaration page)
- Appendices (if relevant)

17.2.2. Copyright Statement

This [Copyright statement](#) should be placed on a single page on the first page of the thesis.

17.2.3. Title page

Please amend this example of a [Title Page](#) as per your details and requirements.

17.2.4. Acknowledgements

This section normally includes acknowledgements of assistance including scholarships and grants, acknowledgements of assistance from supervisors and colleagues and thanks for support from friends, family, etc.

17.2.5. Author's Signed Declaration

Please use this [model author's declaration](#). The author's declaration page should be signed and dated by the candidate at the foot of the page and contain:

- a declaration that at no time during the registration for the research degree has the author been registered for any other University award, without prior agreement of the Doctoral College Board,
- a declaration that no work submitted for a research degree at University of Plymouth may form part of any other degree for the candidate either at the University or at another establishment,
- details if the degree has been undertaken as part of an official agreement between University of Plymouth and another institution(s) (joint or dual degree),
- if the study was part of a collaborative project, then a clear indication of the individual contribution of the candidate and extent of collaboration,
- if the thesis has been proofread by a third party, confirming that a copy of the original thesis is available for inspection, and
- relevant aspects of research training undertaken such as courses completed, conferences attended, presentations of research and published or other forms of presentation of creative research work.

17.2.6. Abstract

This should be approximately 300 words in length and should provide a synopsis of the thesis, stating the nature and scope of work undertaken and the contribution to knowledge in the subject. The abstract must be headed by:

- the candidate's name in full (not initials), and
- the title of thesis.

17.2.7. Illustrations

Illustrations should appear near to the first reference made to them in the text. It may be desirable to group illustrations at the back of the thesis, as appendices, if they:

- need to be compared with one another, or
- are referred to frequently in the text, or
- need to be separate because of their size or character.

List of Illustrations: every illustration in the thesis, including appendices and material that cannot be bound, should be included in the list of illustrations with page numbers or other identification.

Legends and Labels: a short legend should be provided for each illustration detailing the title of the illustration and any other necessary information, e.g. meaning of codes, size and source of item reproduced.

Numbering: illustrations should be numbered consecutively in a single sequence.

Large Illustrations: if it is necessary to bind an illustration into the thesis which is greater than A4 in size, it should be produced on paper that can be folded to fit within the thesis or if too large, then it should be placed in a pocket attached to the inside back cover of the volume.

Material that cannot be bound should be avoided if possible. Any such material that cannot be bound near to the related text should be:

- packaged in such a way that it can be bound with the thesis, or
- stored in a pocket attached to the inside back cover, or
- gathered into another volume and stored in a rigid container of the same size as the bound thesis.

17.2.8. Tables

If there are relatively few tables, each should appear near to the first reference made to them in the text. Each table should, if possible, appear complete on one page. It may be desirable to group tables at the back of the thesis, as appendices, if:

- they are referred to frequently in the text, or
- there are many tables.

Number and Title: each table should have a number and title. The number should precede the title and the title should describe the content of the table.

Tables within the text should be numbered in a single sequence, separate from illustrations. Tables that are not the work of the author but that are reproduced in the thesis should be numbered and treated as illustrations. Tables in an appendix should have a separate sequence. If there is more than one sequence of tables, the different sequences should be identified. If a table occupies more than one page, its number should be given on each page, followed, if necessary, by 'continued'.

The size of characters should be large enough to allow the table to be reproduced without risk to legibility. Numerical tables may require a larger character size than the main text. A series of tables should be consistent in character size, use of space, etc.

17.2.9. Appendices

Appendices may contain material of considerable length, lists, documents, commentaries, tables and other matters that if included in the thesis would interrupt the flow. The style should be consistent with the main text.

If long appendices are divided into chapters these divisions should be detailed in the list of contents under the main heading of the appendix. Appendices should follow the main text of the thesis, possibly with a separate list of contents, particularly if the thesis is divided into more than one volume.

Appendices may also take material/physical forms, e.g. sketch/notebooks, etc. (in the case of creative/professional practice). If it is not possible to upload digital versions, these should either be posted separately to the examiners by the DoS or the Doctoral College or (where appropriate and agreed with the examiners) made available during the *viva voce* examination. Please inform the Doctoral College if any of these apply.

Appendices are not included in the thesis's word count.

17.2.10. Bibliography /List of Sources

Full bibliographical references should be given for all works cited in the text and should follow one of the major accepted systems.

A bibliography lists all works which have been read or consulted during the course of the research but will not necessarily be an exhaustive list of all material relevant to it. (Students whose bibliography includes non-textual sources may wish to call this a 'List of Sources' instead of Bibliography.)

Alternatively (on the advice of one's Director of Studies), a list of references (or 'works cited') may be included instead; this is likely to be the case only for PhDs on the Basis of Prior Published Works. Such a list is confined to only those sources mentioned in the thesis text.

The bibliography/list of sources does not count toward the thesis's word length.

17.2.11. Publications

Students are encouraged to publish and/or present their research material in advance of the thesis submission (although this is not a requirement), thereby having some peer review of their work. In such a case, the thesis should include a list of publications with full publication details including their DOIs.

You may also include published work in lieu of a chapter or chapters (see section 15 Your Thesis).

If the thesis itself includes articles or other published written research outputs (e.g. as chapters or equivalent), it is only possible to include Open Access publications or 'green' final manuscript versions of articles or papers within theses for copyright reasons.

17.3. Creative practice

If the thesis includes creative practice, the nature and form of these elements and/or their representation must be approved by the examiners prior to submission (see section 15. Your Thesis).

17.4. Hard Cover/Binding for Personal Use

As noted above, the University does not require or accept bound hard copies of the final accepted version of the thesis. However, students may wish to produce this for themselves, their supervisors or their funders.

If so, any final hardbound thesis should be such that the spine is flexible enough so that it can be opened fully for ease of reading. It should be fixed so that pages cannot be removed or replaced and the cover is rigid to support the weight of the pages when upright

The wording on the spine of a permanent bound thesis should include:

- surname and initials of the candidate,
- qualification aim/achieved,
- year of submission, and
- volume of work if the work consists of more than one volume.

The wording on the front page/cover should include:

- title of the work,
- surname and initials of the candidate,
- qualification aim/achieved, and
- year of submission.

18. The examination of your thesis

Your thesis is examined on the basis of your written thesis and a viva voce examination. Your work will be evaluated according to the [Office for Students' Sector-recognised standards](#) at Level 7 (Masters) or Level 8 (Doctoral) as appropriate to the degree.

Please see the [Flowchart of thesis examination process](#) for information on the steps of the examination.

It is your Director of Studies' responsibility to nominate your examiners at least 4 months prior to the submission of your thesis (or the examination of any part of it – for example, creative practice elements such as a performance or exhibition). This is because all examination teams are rigorously scrutinised by the Doctoral College Board to ensure that they are suitably qualified and experienced to exam you. This can take several months. All Chairs and internal examiners are required to undertake training to serve in these roles. This means that you must keep your DoS informed of your progress and intentions, especially in the run up to submission.

Your DoS should consult you about examiners but is not obliged to take up your suggestions. Under no circumstances should you approach examiners yourself.

18.1. Regulations and criteria for the appointment of Examiners and Chairs

The University's academic regulations relating to the examination of PGR theses require that:

- two examiners are appointed for each research student,
- at least one of these examiners will be external to the University (the external examiner) and the other will normally be internal and independent of the research student and their project (the internal examiner),
- if the candidate is also a member of academic or research staff of the University, then two external examiners and one non-examining Chair are required (no internal examiner required in this case),
- the research student must not have been formally advised or supervised or had any close association with the examiners although the internal examiner may have acted as the independent assessor for the student for Annual Monitoring, as the expert commentator or a member of the assessment panel for the Project Approval or the Confirmation of Route processes,
- an external examiner will not have held any appointment with the University during the period in which the student has been registered for the degree, nor had any formal supervisory or advisory relationship with the student,
- no person who is registered for a research degree may act as an examiner,
- the examiners should normally have at least experience in a total of 3 UK examinations between them at the level of the examination or higher,

- internal examiners must have a current University of Plymouth contract of employment that extends at least beyond a candidate's potential 'Corrections' period (i.e. 8 months following proposed *viva voce* examination),
- be present at the *viva voce* examination, remotely if necessary,
- where an external examiner is nominated with no previous experience of examining a UK research degree, reasons for this nomination need to be submitted by the Director of Studies,
- external examiners must be actively involved in research and with substantial/significant research experience in the subject. Recently retired distinguished researchers or Emeritus Professors are acceptable as external examiners but must commit to being available and contactable until the examination is complete,
- external examiners must be eligible to work for the University,
- the selection of external examiners is subject to the University's general requirements. Details of any past or current association or relationship with the University, its staff or students must be declared at the time the examination arrangements are considered, and
- internal examiners and Chairs must fulfil the current training requirements set by the Doctoral College, normally at least 4 weeks prior to the *viva voce* examination.

An independent non-examining Chair is also appointed to the examination team in the following circumstances:

- you are a member of academic or research staff at the University,
- your examination team is relatively inexperienced,
- 'reasonable adjustments' have been made in *viva voce* examination arrangements or conduct.

The principal duty of the Chair is to ensure that the examination is conducted fairly and professionally and that you are not placed under undue stress or disadvantaged by the form of the *viva voce* examination. Chairs must be present at the *viva voce* examination, although they do not assess your thesis and do not determine the outcome of the examination.

If you would like us to appoint a Chair, please contact the [Doctoral College](#). The reasons for this may include, but are not limited to, any protected characteristics or disabilities you would like us to consider. You may, for example, request a chair of your own gender if you have two examiners of an opposite gender to your own. We will consider all requests but our ability to fulfil them may depend on staff availability. A candidate should normally not have two examiners and a Chair of a different gender to his/her/their own (e.g. a male candidate with two female examiners and a female chair). When considering these cases, we will take into account how the student, the examiners and the chair identify their own gender.

The Doctoral College will contact the student to enquire about these issues and confirmation must be uploaded to GradBook on the RDC.3 page.

All internal examiners and chairs will have undertaken training to ensure that your examination is conducted fairly and without bias.

18.2. Following submission of your thesis

Once all the required checks are completed, you will receive an email from the Doctoral College:

- confirming that your thesis has been sent to the examination team,
- indicating any amendments required to the presentation of the thesis which have been identified by the Doctoral College,
- asking you to contact Disability Services (DS) if appropriate, and
- outlining the general procedures regarding your examination and the possible outcomes.

Prior your *viva voce* examination, each of your examiners will complete an independent report. A copy of these pre-*viva* reports will be held in your student file; these remain confidential throughout the duration of the examination. Should a copy be requested under the Data Protection Act 2018, it will only be provided within the extended timescales allowed under the Act.

18.3. The *viva voce* examination

Viva voce examinations are required for all candidates. The only exception is in the case of resubmitted theses where both examiners agree in advance that the examination will result in either a 'pass' or 'pass subject to the satisfactory completion of corrections' outcome.

The Doctoral College runs workshops on preparing for your *viva voce* examination at least three times each year. Please see the [Researcher Development Programme](#) or email [Research Skills](#) for further details. You should also ask your supervisory team to run a 'mock viva' with you a few weeks before your real one. Your RDC.2 (if undertaken) will also provide you with practice in defending your work.

Your *viva voce* (oral) examination will be organised by your Director of Studies. This should be scheduled no sooner than 6 weeks and no later than 3 months from the date your thesis is sent to your examination team by the Doctoral College. You will be consulted on the date of your *viva voce* examination but please remember that it is often difficult to find a convenient date for both you and your entire examination team.

There are 2 possible formats for oral examinations:

- traditional 'in person' *vivas*, where all participants are in the same room, normally on a University campus (if it is necessary for the examination to be held elsewhere, this must be approved by the Director of the Doctoral College or delegate),
- 'on-line' *vivas*, where some or all of the participants attend by video conference. The format of the *viva voce* examination is to be determined in negotiation with all participants. In the case of 'remote' *vivas*, you will need to confirm with your Director of Studies prior to scheduling that you have the resources (including the bandwidth) to hold the *viva voce* examination remotely with no anticipated disruption. If this is not the case, you will need to work together to find a solution (e.g. coming on campus).

If you have a disability, please contact [Disability Inclusion Services](#) to discuss whether special procedures for or adjustments to the oral examination of the thesis are appropriate. Please notify the [Doctoral College](#) as soon as possible of any requirements. An independent non-examining Chair will be appointed to your examination team if this is the case to ensure that these requirements are adhered to.

Your examiners may exceptionally request that you make a brief presentation at your *viva voce* examination; if this is the case, they must give you at least 10 working days' notice. You can also exceptionally request to make a presentation at your *viva voce* examination, but this must be requested via your Director of Studies and approved by all examiners at least 10 working days in advance of the *viva voce* examination. Please note that examiners are not obliged to approve this request.

You may invite one of your supervisors to attend your *viva voce* examination. They should confirm your request with either the Internal Examiner, Chair or Doctoral College in advance. Your supervisor may only contribute to or participate in the discussion if explicitly requested by one of the examiners. Please note that they might be asked questions by the examiners without you present.

The University has a fit-to-sit policy ([Student regulations, policies and procedures](#)), and this includes *viva voce* examinations. If there are genuine reasons why you cannot attend your oral examination (e.g., sickness), you should contact your Director of Studies or a member of the examination team and ask for the oral examination to be re-scheduled. Similarly, if any of the examining team are unable to attend for good reason (e.g., illness) then the examination will need to be rescheduled. If this is the case, we will try to give you as much notice as possible in the circumstances.

At the end of the *viva voce* examination, you should be asked whether there is anything you would like to say or add that hasn't been raised already. If you are not explicitly asked, but have something you want your examiners to know, do not hesitate to offer this.

A PhD *viva voce* examination normally lasts between 90 minutes and 4 hours; a ResM *viva voce* examination usually lasts 60-90 minutes.

Participants should always be offered breaks after 90 minutes (and may request one at any time).

Following the *viva voce* examination, you (and your supervisor, if attending) will be asked to leave and the examination team (examiners and chair only) will hold a post-viva meeting. The purpose of the post-viva meeting is to determine the outcome of the examination, on the basis of your thesis and *viva voce* examination.

Once an examination outcome is agreed, you and your supervisor will normally be invited back for a 'post-viva' meeting to receive an informal statement of the outcome. Please ensure that the internal examiner or Chair is able to contact you. If the examiners are unable to come to an agreed decision, then a post-viva meeting may not be held and you will be told why this is the case.

You will receive a formal notification of the outcome of the *viva voce* examination (together with a final list of corrections/requirements, if relevant) from the Doctoral College when they are received from the examination team. This is usually 2-3 weeks after the *viva voce* examination.

19. Examination Outcomes and Post-Viva

19.1. Examination outcomes

Following your oral examination, your examiners must make one of the following recommendations based on the Office for Students Sector- recognised standards:

1. pass: the degree be awarded. Your examining team may provide advisory guidance on editorial corrections to the thesis, such as minor typographical or grammatical errors; or
2. pass subject to the satisfactory completion of corrections: the thesis is satisfactory in substance, but the examiners have identified shortcomings in the shaping or articulation of the research. Corrections must be made to the satisfaction of one or all of the examiners by six months from the date of the formal notification of the outcome of the examination; or
3. defer: resubmission allowed. The thesis is unsatisfactory in substance, with shortcomings in the presentation and/or content, and may require further research. You are permitted to resubmit for the degree (with detailed advice) and be re-examined on one further occasion by twelve months from the date of the formal notification of the outcome of the examination, or
4. compensatory award: the degree for which the research student has been examined is not to be awarded but a lower level degree (MPhil, ResM, PgCert or PgDip) may be awarded subject to the presentation of the thesis being amended to the satisfaction of the examiners by one month from the date of the formal notification of the outcome of the examination, or
5. fail: the degree not to be awarded and the candidate not be permitted to be re-examined.

The recommendation of the examiners will be verbally outlined to you informally at the end of the *viva voce* examination, following deliberations by the examination team. Formal written confirmation of the outcome of the examination, including the corrections or further research required (as relevant), will be sent to you by the Doctoral College as soon as possible. Please note that this cannot be issued until the examiners send their paperwork to the Doctoral College and that they have two weeks from the date of the *viva voce* examination to do so.

In the unlikely event that your examiners' recommendations are not unanimous, they are required to report separately to the Doctoral College. The Director of the Doctoral College will then seek a resolution. This will normally involve the appointment of another external examiner who will read the thesis. You will be informed of progress and be informed of the outcome at the earliest opportunity.

You are required to complete and submit Annual Monitoring reports until you have formally completed your degree, even if you are post-viva and completing corrections or a revised thesis.

19.2. PGR examination outcomes processes

Please see the '[PGR Examination Outcomes Flowchart](#)'.

19.3. Post viva voce examination processes

1. If the outcome of your examination is 'pass', you must submit an electronic copy of the thesis for the University's electronic repository, , within 60 days of the formal notification of your examination outcome.

If you are awarded a pass degree and your examiners also supply a list of minor editorial corrections, these are considered advisory. While it is assumed that you will want to do so, you are not required to respond to them prior to supplying the final version of your thesis for the award of your degree.

You should also supply your Director of Studies and any collaborating establishments with a hardcopy of your thesis if requested to do so.

Failure to submit the electronic copy of your thesis within 60 days of the official notification of the outcome may result in your degree not being awarded. You cannot receive your award until the electronic copy of your thesis has been submitted and approved by the Doctoral College and any outstanding academic related debts to the University have been paid.

2. If the outcome of your examination is 'pass subject to the satisfactory completion of corrections', you must address all of the corrections on the list you receive from the Doctoral College.

These must be submitted to the Doctoral College within six months of the formal notification of the outcome. Failure to submit by the required date will normally result in failure of the award.

If you are unable to meet this deadline, you must request an extension in writing to the Doctoral College. This will need to be supported by your DoS and your School.

Your examiners are not expected to act as mentors or advisors during this process and so you should not ask them for advice. Instead, your supervisors can advise you on how to address correction. If you have any questions about what is required of you, ask your Director of Studies or other supervisors to liaise with the examiners on your behalf for the purposes of clarification. If this isn't possible, please contact either the Chair of your *viva voce* examination (if there was one) or the Doctoral College.

If your corrections are approved, your degree will be awarded when the electronic copy of the final corrected thesis has been submitted to the University repository (PEARL), the submission been approved by the Doctoral College and any outstanding academic related debts to the University have been paid.

You should also supply your Director of Studies and any collaborating establishments with a hardcopy of your thesis if requested to do so.

Failure to submit the electronic copy of your thesis within 60 days of the official notification of the outcome may result in your degree not being awarded. If your corrections are not approved, and these have been submitted for the first time for a thesis that had not been resubmitted as the result of a deferral, then you are entitled to a '2nd attempt'. It will be explained why your corrections were deficient and you will receive a list of the corrections that are still required; in this case, the protocol described above will be followed again.

In the event that your corrections are not approved, and these have been submitted either for the second time or to a thesis that had been resubmitted as the result of a deferral, then your examiners will recommend either:

- that you receive a compensatory lower award: that is, the degree for which you have been examined is not to be awarded but a lower level degree (MPhil, ResM, PgCert or PgDip) be awarded instead. In this case, you must make amendments to references to the level of the degree and your examiners may provide a list of recommended typographical corrections which you may choose to attend to, or
 - that you fail: the degree is not to be awarded and you are not permitted to be re-examined.
3. If the outcome of your examination is a 'deferral' – that is, that you are permitted to resubmit for re-examination for the award on one further occasion – your examination team will provide you with details of further research requirements following your *viva voce* examination.

You must submit your revised thesis to the Doctoral College office within 12 months of the formal notification of the outcome of your examination. Failure to resubmit by this date will normally be regarded as failure of the examination.

If you are unable to meet this deadline, you must request an extension in writing to the Doctoral College. This will need to be supported by your DoS and the local Research Degree Management team.

The preparation of a resubmitted thesis is not an iterative process between you and your examiners and they are not expected to act as mentors or advisors during this process. If you have any queries, ask your Director of Studies or other supervisor to liaise with the examiners on your behalf.

A resubmitted thesis is normally examined by the same examination team. Sometimes, however, your original examiners are not available and a new examination team (in whole or part) must be nominated and approved by the Doctoral College Board.

The examination for a resubmitted thesis is run as for the first time, with the following exceptions:

- the examination outcome 'Deferral – resubmission' is not available for resubmitted theses.
- if, having read the resubmitted thesis, the examiners agree that the outcome of the examination will be either 'Pass' or 'Pass subject to the satisfactory completion of corrections', they have the discretion to waive the requirement to hold a second *viva voce* examination.
- if the examination outcome is 'Pass subject to the satisfactory completion of corrections', and these are not made to the satisfaction of your examiner(s), then you are not entitled to a second attempt.

In the case of a waived second *viva voce* examination, your examiners must inform the Doctoral College no later than 10 University working days prior to the scheduled *viva voce* examination and you will be informed as soon as possible thereafter.

Please note that you will be required to pay a resubmission fee to be re-examined, whether or not the *viva voce* examination is waived.

4. If the outcome of your examination is that you should be offered a 'compensatory award' and your thesis does not require any corrections, you need to submit an electronic copy of the thesis to the University's repository within 60 days of the formal notification of the outcome.

You must still amend the title of the degree on the cover page as well as any references to the level of the degree throughout the thesis. These are not considered 'corrections' and do not need to be approved by a member of the examination team.

If your examiners require further corrections to your thesis in order to meet the criteria for a lower award, these will be outlined informally at the end of your oral examination and formally in your outcome letter from the Doctoral College.

These corrections must be made and submitted to the Doctoral College within one month of the formal notification of the examination outcome. Failure to submit by the due date will normally result in failure of the award.

If you are unable to meet this deadline, you must request an extension in writing to the Doctoral College. This will need to be supported by your DoS and your School.

Your examiners are not expected to act as mentors or advisors during this process and so you should not ask them for advice. Instead, your supervisors can advise you on how to address correction. If you have any questions about what is required of you, ask your Director of Studies or other supervisors to liaise with the examiners on your behalf for the purposes of clarification. If this isn't possible, please contact either the Chair of your *viva voce* examination (if there was one) or the Doctoral College.

If your corrections are approved, your degree will be awarded when the electronic copy of the final corrected thesis has been submitted to the University repository (PEARL), the submission been approved by the Doctoral College and any outstanding academic debts to the University have been paid.

If the corrections are not approved, then the outcome of the examination is a fail; you will not receive an award and no re-examination is permitted.

19.4.Award of your degree

Following receipt and approval of your electronic thesis submission, you will receive a congratulations letter from the Office of the Vice-Chancellor and will be invited to the next award ceremony. Your degree certificate will normally be issued at the ceremony, or in advance if requested. It normally takes 5-6 weeks to receive your certificate following successful submission to PEARL.

20. Aegrotat and posthumous research degrees

The University may award an aegrotat degree to students who are unable to complete the oral examination in the usual way due to terminal health condition. The candidate, or candidate's family, should confirm that they will accept an aegrotat degree prior to examination.

A posthumous research degree may be awarded to a candidate who has completed a significant enough body of work to demonstrate that they would have met the appropriate standard for the award (for example, the RDC.2 stage in some degrees). It is advised that a posthumous degree has the support of the candidate's family prior to examination.

In both cases the Doctoral College Board shall seek evidence that the candidate would have been likely to have been successful had the oral examination taken place.

A request from the supervisors to the Doctoral College Board to proceed with the examination will be required. A brief report explaining that the thesis and work carried out by the candidate are of sufficient quality for the research degree submitted should accompany the request. This should be supported by a compilation of the student's work, such as draft chapters, papers, an RDC.2 submission or conference presentations, to provide evidence that the candidate was likely to have achieved the award.

The supervisors should include reasons as to why the work should be considered for examination, taking into account how far the research had advanced and the extent of understanding of the topic by the student, etc.

In the case of an aegrotat degree, the request should be made after all other avenues have been investigated and exhausted when appropriate, such as interruptions, change to part-time, termination at a lower degree level, etc.

Two examiners, at least one of them external, must assess the thesis and report independently on whether the degree should be awarded or whether a lower award is more appropriate e.g. a ResM or an MPhil instead of a PhD. If the student was an academic or research staff member of the University, two external examiners will normally be required. Other requirements for examiners as in normal research degree regulations need also be fulfilled.

Outcomes of the examination should be as for normal degrees excluding the possibility of corrections/amendments and resubmission.

Other forms of research outcomes may be included and/or considered in the examination, such as conference presentations, papers, annual reports, etc.

The electronic copy of the thesis will mention it was submitted in partial fulfilment of a posthumous/aegrotat award and must be submitted to the University repository as detailed above prior to conferment of the degree.

21. Teaching and working as a postgraduate research student

The University values the contribution of PGR students who teach. This can be a very beneficial activity for both you and for the university, enabling:

- you to develop valuable experience for a future academic career;
- undergraduate students to benefit from being taught by someone who may be closer to their experience of being a student;
- increased support for research-informed teaching across the institution.

There are a range of academic roles which PGR students may have in the University, including core academic staff who are also undertaking a research degree and PGR students who undertake small amounts of teaching.

Your School should be able to advise you on what opportunities there are to teach. Before agreeing to undertake any teaching, you should discuss any opportunities with your supervisory team and seek their advice on whether it is suitable and appropriate for you. Unless stated in your contract, you are not obliged to undertake teaching.

FT students should not undertake more than six hours per week on teaching.

Information on training opportunities for teaching offered by the University can be found in the [Educational Development](#) pages.

You are reminded that full-time students are expected to devote 37 hours per week to their studies. Part-time students are expected to devote at least 18.5 hours per week on average to their studies. Your funder may also have conditions and recommendations about the amount of time you can spend in employment, including teaching, and you should check these before undertaking any work.

22. Complaints

Information about making a complaint can be found in the [Complaints and Appeals](#) webpage. The University's [Student Complaints Procedure](#) page has more detailed information and the process to follow.

Issues that can be considered under the Complaints Procedure include any aspect of your supervision and training as a research degrees student, facilities and university-managed accommodation.

Complaints submitted more than 40 University working days after the issue(s) occurred will be considered only in exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances are those in which you are able to demonstrate good reason for not submitting the complaint earlier. The decision on whether or not to accept a late complaint is taken by the Complaints and Appeals Office and is the final decision of the University.

You should always try to informally resolve your problem or issue by discussing it with the member of staff most directly concerned. This might be your supervisor(s), School PGR Coordinator, or a person responsible for a particular service. Many complaints can be dealt with through discussion and explanation. If you are not sure to whom you should make your complaint, you can ask UPSU Advice or the Doctoral College for guidance.

Issues that cannot be considered under the Complaints Procedure include admissions, complaints about bullying or harassment and academic decisions (for the latter, see the section 20. Appeals against academic decisions in this Handbook).

If your complaint relates to bullying and harassment by another student, then the matter will be investigated using the [Student Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedure](#). You can make a complaint using the University's '[Speak Up](#)' tool or you can email the [Student Conduct](#) office.

If your complaint relates to bullying and harassment in relation to a member of staff then the matter will be investigated using the [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#) policy. Further information on the University's approach to Bullying and Harassment can be found in the [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#) webpages or by emailing [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#) team.

23. Appeals against academic decisions

You have the right to appeal against academic decisions affecting your progression. Such academic decisions include, but are not restricted to:

- the decision to withdraw you from the research degree due to lack of academic progress (including during your probationary period),
- the decision to withdraw you from the research degree due to lack of contact with the University (including during your probationary period),
- the decision to withdraw a student from the research degree following the Project Approval process,
- the decision to withdraw a student from the research degree following the Confirmation of Route process,
- the decision to require a student to remain on a Masters level path following the Confirmation of Route process,
- the decision, as a result of a recommendation of the examiners, not to award a student the degree for which they were registered, and not to permit the student to submit a revised thesis for the same degree.

You must make your appeal within 10 University working days of the formal notification of the academic decision.

Please note that appeals cannot be made against the academic or professional judgement of examiners, unless there is evidence of a material irregularity related to assessment.

The regulations and procedure related to appeals against the decision of an award assessment board or academic decision (taught and research) are available from the [Academic appeals](#) webpage.

If you have any questions about making an appeal, please email the [Appeals](#) team.

24. Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team is here to support you throughout your time at the University of Plymouth and celebrate you for who you are. Details about advice, policies, events and support networks can be found on the [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#) (EDI) webpages.

As a postgraduate research student, you are eligible to join free, confidential [staff networks](#) to provide peer support and social events with like-minded people. Membership of the networks is confidential and you can join in as much or as little as you want. To join a network, email the [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#) team.

The University has a zero tolerance approach to bullying, abusive and harmful behaviours that can undermine a person's dignity. If you are struggling you can make use of our free, confidential Dignity and Respect Advisor Service for support and guidance by emailing the [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#) team or you can report incidents online (anonymously if you prefer) by going to our [Speak Up – report abuse, harm or hate](#) page.

We host a huge range of free events throughout the year that are all free and open to everyone in the University and the local area. Keep up to date with our events calendar in the [Equality, diversity and inclusion](#) pages and join in!

For support, information or any questions about EDI, please email the [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#) team.

25. Minimum resources for postgraduate research students

The University's postgraduate research (PGR) provision is based on the expectations of the [Office of Students Conditions of Registration](#).

PGR students can be enrolled in full-time (FT) or part-time (PT) modes and may be based at a campus of the University or a remote site (*i.e.* distance mode).

The University is committed to providing equality of opportunity to all PGR students, irrespective of the group or groups to which they belong (based on, for example, a declared disability, specific cultural background, location or age).

PGR students have different needs and requirements depending on the subject of study, discipline, methodology and nature of their research programme. Despite these differences, the University has identified certain minimum requirements which it is committed to providing all PGR students (through a combination of the Doctoral College, Schools and Faculties, external partners and/or 'Node').

Please note that any equipment that you have been allocated during your research degree (for example, a laptop) will need to be returned to the University upon termination of your registration.

25.1. Provision of all PGR Students

All PGR students will be provided with the following:

- a suitably qualified supervision team that encourages the development and successful pursuit of their programme of research,
- access to the University's IT and online systems including email, software and digital learning environment,
- access to the University's Library resources through Primo, the gateway to print and electronic collections such as books, e-books, journals, digital maps, British Standards, e-newspapers and more. The majority of electronic resources are available off-campus. An overview of subject resources is available via online [LibGuides](#),
- access to [GradBook](#),
- access to a suitable programme of research-related skills and development opportunities that contribute to their ability to successfully complete their programme of study,
- access to and support for a range of development opportunities that contribute to their ability to develop personal and, where pertinent, employment-related skills,
- guidance on the ethical pursuit of research and the avoidance of research misconduct,
- mechanisms for addressing their feedback both as individuals and collectively,

- the opportunity to raise complaints or to appeal,

All PGR students located at a campus of the University of Plymouth will additionally be provided with the following:

- a work-space with the following minimum attributes:
 - a desk and/or workbench, which may be shared or “hot-desked”,
 - a lockable space for personal items,
 - access to a computer, which may be shared or “hot-desked”,
 - access to printing facilities, which may require payment,
- access to appropriate facilities to conduct their research, agreed at admission and/or Project Approval stages,
- access to photocopying to an agreed maximum,
- library access (including to its electronic holdings) and an entitlement to a defined quantity of Inter-library loans,
- access to all student-focused resources listed in the [University's Student Handbook](#) (except for those identified explicitly for undergraduates and postgraduates on 'taught' programmes only),
- access to at least one subject-relevant taught postgraduate module run by the University.

Please note that this represents the University's minimum commitment for any student based at a University of Plymouth campus (whether full-time, part-time or in 'writing up' mode) and will be exceeded in many departments, especially for full-time students. Information on disciplinary- specific resource expectations should be discussed at interview stage and made available in local research degree handbooks.

25.2. Students studying at distance

Distant PGR students include those who are not located at a campus of the University as well as those based at co-operating institutions remote from a University campus or one of its partner Institutions.

When PGR students are based either full-time or part-time at a co-operating institution, then it is expected that the Institution will provide facilities in line with those outlined above.

Distance students can expect good access to their supervisory team by email, video conferencing, and/or telephone and/or a number of face- to-face meetings at pre-determined intervals. Access to appropriate research facilities by distance students must be determined prior to enrolment on the programme of study.

Additional [library support services](#) are available for part-time students, students living more than 25 miles from the University and for students with disabilities registered with Disability Services.

The [SCONUL Access Scheme](#) provides borrowing privileges at most other higher education libraries in the UK and Ireland for University of Plymouth postgraduate research students. This scheme does not normally include access to IT or electronic library services.

26. Representation and Governance

We welcome feedback and encourage students to become actively involved in the committees that shape the postgraduate journey.

The regular Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) is a national survey of PGR experience and satisfaction. When PRES opens, you will be sent a link to participate and we strongly encourage you to complete the survey. The results provide us important feedback and we use them to plan and improve the PGR experience.

Annual Monitoring reports also offer you the opportunity to comment on the provision of your degrees and highlight any areas of concern.

Postgraduate students are also given voice through Research and Doctoral Committees at School or Faculty level. Your School or Faculty will advertise opportunities for student representatives (reps) on these committees. We encourage you to volunteer for these roles and/or to liaise with your reps if you would like them to raise any issues. Contact your [School PGR Coordinator](#) or [Deputy Director of the Doctoral College \(DDDC\)](#) for your Faculty to find out who your reps are and what opportunities there are to serve as one.

Faculty Doctoral Committees report to Doctoral College Board (DCB). DCB is a University-level committee that takes decisions about the provision of research degrees. Issues of relevance at individual/personal, departmental or School levels should always be raised in the first instance at the appropriate local level.

DCB meets 3 times per year (once per academic term).

Student reps are entitled to receive training, resources and ongoing support from UPSU's Student Voice team; contact details will be shared with UPSU for this purpose. Student reps can also make use of 1:1 support and guidance to help them prepare for high level University committees.