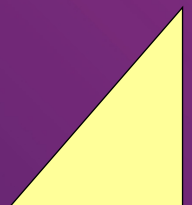


Code of Practice for Research Degrees

AU-GSMC-19-2763-B

Applicable to postgraduate students in all years of
research degree programmes

2020-21



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Policy Summary

The Code of Practice for Research Degrees defines minimum standards for research degree programmes, including:

- Selection, admission and induction.
- Responsibilities of Supervisors and of research students.
- Arrangements for progress and review.
- Research training and development.

Related Regulations, Policies, and Guidance

These general regulations should be read in conjunction with the University's [General Regulations for the Presentation of Theses](#) (Appendix D) and the [Code of Practice for Research Degrees](#) (Appendix E)

General regulations for other types of programmes operated by the University are available on the [general regulations webpage](#).

Where Regulations are included in the text of this Code of Practice, they are shown in shaded boxes. Unless indicated otherwise, references are to the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis, included as Appendix D.

Version Control

Reference Number	Version	Responsible Officer	Approved by	Approval Date	Effective Date
AU-GSMC-18-1920	A	Alison Birch	University Research Committee	July 2019	September 2019
AU-GSMC-19-2763	A	Alison Birch	University Research Committee	July 2020	September 2020

This document is reviewed annually; please ensure you are referring to the current version, which takes precedence over earlier versions.

Summary of key changes and/or additions to this document for 2020/21

Section		Page
	<i>Minor revisions to reflect changes to Regulations and to aid understanding throughout document</i>	
	<i>Changes throughout document to reflect the incoming College organisational structure and the newly centralised support for research degree programmes through the Graduate School</i>	
5.1	<i>More information about the expectations for applicant interviews</i>	
6	<i>Minor revision to training requirement of experienced supervisors</i>	
Appendix F	<i>New appendix: Aston Research Data Management Policy</i>	

SAS/AJB/Graduate School/July 2020

1 Foreword

This document is one of a suite of inter-related documents which forms an overall institutional policy for the conduct of research degrees, and which includes the institutional response to the Expectations and Core Practices set out in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education as they apply to research degrees (November 2018). University staff and students are expected to be familiar with the sections of the University Code of Practice that are particularly relevant to their own responsibilities. The University Code defines minimum standards for research degrees which may be supplemented at the School level by additional advice.

Unless stated otherwise, where Regulations are referred to in the text the references are to the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis (included in full as Appendix D).

2 Definitions

2.1 Research

The definition of research in this document draws on the definition used for the purposes of the Research Excellence Framework (REF)¹ which defines research as.

‘a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared.’

‘It **includes** work of direct relevance to the needs of commerce, industry, culture, society and to the public and voluntary sectors; scholarship²; the invention and generation of ideas, images, performances, artefacts including design, where these lead to new or substantially improved insights; and the use of existing knowledge in experimental development to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products and processes, including design and construction. It excludes routine testing and routine analysis of materials, components and processes such as for the maintenance of national standards, as distinct from the development of new analytical techniques. It also excludes the development of teaching materials that do not embody original research.’

‘It **includes** research that is published, disseminated or made publicly available in the form of assessable research outputs, and confidential reports (as defined in paragraph 26.1).’

2.2 Research Programmes

This University Code of Practice is intended to apply to the wide range of research qualifications offered by the University, including MPhil, MD, PhD, professional doctorates (e.g. DBA, DOptom), and the University award of MSc/MA (by Research), although not all sections of the document apply equally to all types of research programme.

¹ www.ref.ac.uk; Publication REF 2019/01 ‘Guidance on submissions’.

² Scholarship for the REF is defined as the creation, development and maintenance of the intellectual infrastructure of subjects and disciplines, in forms such as dictionaries, scholarly editions, catalogues and contributions to major research databases.’ Journal articles and monographs are also important forms of scholarship.

3 Institutional Arrangements

3.1 Governance

Dean of the Graduate School

The Dean of the Graduate School has oversight of research degree provision across the University.

Graduate School Management Committee

The Dean of the Graduate School chairs the Graduate School Management Committee (GSMC) which is a sub-committee of the University Research Committee. GSMC is responsible, amongst other things, for:

- considering and making recommendations on all matters concerning the regulation, assurance and enhancement of the quality and standards of research degree programmes including the supervision and examination of research students; and
- monitoring the extent and effectiveness of provision of research training, supervision and other support for research students.

GSMC has academic staff and research student representation from each College, plus representation from central areas that support research students.

Associate Dean Research

The role of the Associate Dean Research in each School is to support the School's Executive Dean in matters relating to research, including in respect of research degree programmes.

College Research Committee

The College Research Committee is normally chaired by the Associate Dean Research. This Committee considers matters relating to research degree programmes and students in the College, and may make recommendations to GSMC. There is a student representative on the College Research Committee.

Programme Director

Each College has a Director of Research Degree Programmes who has day-to-day responsibility for research degree programmes and students in the College. In addition, professional doctorates with a taught element have a Programme Director.

Postgraduate Research Tutor

Each College also has a Postgraduate Research Tutor who is a member of academic staff independent of the supervisory team, the Associate Dean Research and the Director of Research Degree Programmes, and from whom advice can be sought, for example if the supervisory relationship is not working well or in case of welfare issues.

3.2 Regulations

Regulations in respect of research degrees are approved by the University Research Committee (acting with delegated authority from the Senate) on the recommendation of the Graduate School Management Committee. Regulations cover:

- a requirements for admission to the programme;
- b procedures for considering claims for the recognition of prior learning (RPL);
- c the academic and procedural requirements for research awards, including supervisory arrangements;

- d the requirements for progression, including monitoring and review arrangements for the award, and the minimum and maximum periods within which the programme may be completed;
- e assessment methods, requirements and procedures, including the criteria for achieving the award;
- f procedures for dealing with research misconduct;³
- g information on the University's complaints and appeals processes.

In addition to the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis (Appendix D), there are also General Regulations for Research Degrees by Staff of Aston University and by Aston University Graduates. These Regulations cover: staff candidates for MPhil, MD and PhD; the degrees of Doctor of Science and Doctor of Letters; and the PhD by Previously Published Work.

General Regulations on the Presentation of Theses (Appendix E) provide guidance on the submission of the thesis for examination and after the examination.

The Regulations and codes of practice for research degrees are available to staff, students, applicants, graduates and examiners via the [Graduate School website](#). They are also available on the My Aston Portal (MAP) homepage of enrolled students.

3.3 Target Setting and Monitoring

- a Recruitment targets for research degrees are proposed by the Colleges in co-operation with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and agreed by the University Executive; achievement towards targets is monitored by Associate Deans Research and by Graduate School Management Committee.
- b Graduate School Management Committee receives a number of reports to monitor research degree provision, including:
 - i. annual report, by full-time and part-time cohort, of awards and completion times, and withdrawals;
 - ii annual report on student appeals;
 - iii annual summary of comments from External Examiners;
 - iv employment destinations of research students;
 - v Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) results.
- c Research degree programmes are reviewed on an annual basis by College Research Committees in accordance with the procedures for evaluation of research degree programmes. Factors to be considered by the College Research Committees through this process include:
 - i recruitment profiles; submission and completion times and rates; pass, referral and fail rates; withdrawal rates;
 - ii analysis of comments from External Examiners;
 - iii feedback from research students, graduates and external stakeholders;
 - iv provision of research and generic skills training;
 - v any appeals or complaints dealt with at the College level.

The University's Research Committee, through the Graduate School Management Committee, ensures that these factors have been given due attention.

³ covered in more detail in the University's Research Integrity Assurance Procedures in Appendix B.

⁴ See Research Integrity Policy in Appendix A and Aston Research Data Management Policy in Appendix F

- d A College's research degree provision is subject to periodic review every six years. The periodic review panel includes at least two members who are external to the University and a student member from a different College. The review panel meets with academic and support staff involved with the programmes, and with research students.

4 The Research Environment

The results from the last national Research Excellence Framework (REF) in 2014 confirmed the quality and depth of the University's research:

- 78% of the research submitted was evaluated as world-leading or internationally excellent;
- research impact was ranked 35 out of 128 institutions, with 91% of Impact rated internationally excellent or world leading.

The University is committed to only accepting research students into an environment that provides support for doing and learning about research, where excellent research, recognised by the relevant subject community, is occurring and where the appropriate conditions for admission can be met.

'Common features of an effective research environment include:

- originality, significance and rigour of research outputs recognised through peer review or through the award of grants resulting in outputs such as journal publications, books and work produced in other media
- capacity of research-active staff (including postdoctoral researchers and research students)
- knowledge exchange and impacts (including knowledge transfer partnerships) with an emphasis on the practical impact of research outcomes and demonstrable ability to attract external funding' (from UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Research Degrees, Guiding Principle 2).

Maintaining integrity and high standards is of central importance to the University. All members of the University's research community are responsible for maintaining professional standards. The University's Research Integrity Policy (Appendix A), prescribes standards of work performance and conduct expected of all persons engaged in research at the University.

Research students are supported by a Graduate Development Team, comprising experts from different areas (including Library Services, Careers+Placements, Research and Knowledge Exchange) who collectively provide a range of training and development opportunities for research students and research staff.

5 Selection, Admission and Induction of Students

5.1 Selection and Admission

The selection of research students must follow the requirements set out in the Regulations and any additional criteria set by the School and approved by the appropriate College Research Committee and the Graduate School Management Committee. The admissions criteria should be available to applicants both via the web (<http://www.aston.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/research-programmes/>) and in printed form.

The selection of students should take into account any declared additional needs the student may have, and consideration of how such needs may be supported.

Prior to interview, applicants should be provided with details of the [University's Enabling Team](#) and asked whether they require any measures/adjustments to be put in place in order to support a disability or additional need. Applicants should be advised that, depending on the nature of the support requested, their disability/additional need may need to be disclosed to other interview panel members.

Applicants should be interviewed, in English, if necessary by telephone or online, and should be invited to visit the University. Wherever possible, applicants should have the opportunity to meet with relevant staff and students.

Interviews should be conducted by the potential Supervisor and a person independent of the proposed supervisory team – Colleges may specify additional requirements for the composition of the interview panel. Consideration should be given to the diversity of the panel. Between them, the panel members are expected to have undertaken the University's training in: recruitment and selection; [equality and diversity](#); and [unconscious bias](#). All prospective supervisors are required to undertake the research student supervisor training (see section 6) and at least one panel member's training in this area must be up-to-date at the time of the interview. Offer letters will not be issued to applicants unless all members of the proposed supervisory team have completed research student supervisor training within the previous three years.

Consideration of applications should include: whether the proposed area of research will sustain the required level of investigation for the research degree concerned; whether the proposed research can be expected to be completed within the duration permitted for the research degree concerned; the continued availability of required resources, including appropriate supervision, throughout the degree. It may be helpful to include a skills-based assessment in the interview, such as: a demonstration of practical techniques; understanding of methodology; or questions based on a journal article distributed in advance of the interview.

Students may only be admitted to a research degree programme with the involvement of at least two members of University staff, one of whom must be the College's Associate Dean Research or their nominee. Students may only be admitted to the University if their application has been approved by the College's Associate Dean Research or their nominee.

Students must be sent a formal offer letter which should normally include the following information:

- a the expected duration of study;
- b the expectations of the student in terms of attendance, progress reports, contact with supervisors;
- c arrangements for enrolment;
- d references to the University's Regulations, Code of Practice for Research Degrees, student handbook, sources of funding;
- e a clear indication of the financial costs of the programme;
- f the requirements and conditions of any sponsor (if known);
- g reference to practical information, for example concerning accommodation and financial or travel information;
- h the terms and conditions of offer.

Other information to be provided early in the students' attendance includes:

- a details of health and safety procedures;
- b University Regulations;
- c Graduate School Student Handbook, including School-specific information;

- d an outline of any opportunities to undertake teaching or other duties and any conditions associated with these, including training requirements;
- e good practice in research and guidance on research ethics;⁴
- f guidance on intellectual property rights.

5.2 Induction

Students will be provided with an appropriate induction programme and introductory material providing details about where they can find essential information. This will include a cross-College Induction to the Graduate School, as well as separate College-specific induction events. The Graduate School induction will comprise presentations from, as a minimum, the Dean of the Graduate School, areas represented by the Graduate Development Team, and the Aston Postgraduate Research Society (APRS). College induction events will provide an opportunity to meet key staff and other research students.

The student should meet their Supervisor at the earliest opportunity to discuss their respective responsibilities. The Learning Agreement may form the basis of this meeting. For distance learning research students and other students who are away from the campus for a significant part of their research, appropriate arrangements for regular contact will be established.

6 Supervision

Every research student must be supervised by a Supervisor who is a member of the Academic Staff of the University, as defined in Section 1 of the Statutes or by an appropriately qualified and experienced senior Research Fellow. Research Fellows may only be appointed as Supervisor when their contract extends beyond the expected thesis submission date of the student. A Teaching Fellow with a doctorate may be Supervisor for a student with the qualification aim of DBA, subject to the approval of the Associate Dean Research. The Academic Staff Supervisor of an MD student will additionally have experience of research involving human participants and/or human tissue and appropriate academic scientific expertise to support Protocol development and delivery of the study. For students following the Doctor of Business Administration, a Process Supervisor will be appointed for the taught element of the programme; the Process Supervisor will fulfil the role of Supervisor until the supervisory team is appointed. (*Regulation 6.1a*)

The Supervisor should have the appropriate skills and subject knowledge to support, encourage and monitor research students effectively.

A research student's supervision should normally be supplemented by at least one Associate Supervisor who is a member of the Academic Staff. A Teaching Fellow with a doctorate may be Associate Supervisor for a student with the qualification aim of DBA, subject to the approval of the Associate Dean Research. Additional Associate Supervisors may be appointed in appropriate circumstances. (*Regulation 6.3*)

The role of any Associate Supervisor(s) will be clarified at an initial meeting with the student and documented in a Learning Agreement (see Section 6.2 of this Code).

No person may be the Supervisor for more than six research students at any time without the agreement of the Associate Dean Research; this number should be proportionate for part-time staff. (*Regulation 6.1f*)

⁴ See Research Integrity Policy in Appendix A and Aston Research Data Management Policy in Appendix F

The Associate Dean Research will review the situation, taking account of the overall workload of the member of staff concerned and the extent to which Associate Supervisors have been appointed.

A Supervisor who has not previously supervised a doctoral candidate to successful completion will not normally supervise more than three research students. (*Regulation 6.1f*)

Supervisors who have not supervised at least four students to successful doctoral completion at the time of their appointment to Aston must attend the University's training session on research student supervision. Supervisors who have such supervisory experience will be inducted into Aston procedures and policies by appropriate College and Graduate School staff and are expected to undertake the online 'update' training. The Associate Dean Research or nominee in each School must appoint an Associate Supervisor for a Supervisor who has not previously supervised a research student to successful completion.

A Supervisor who has not previously supervised a doctoral candidate to successful completion will be supported by an Associate Supervisor who is a member of the Academic Staff who has supervised a doctoral student to successful completion as main Supervisor. (*Regulation 6.1d*)

The University expects that all Supervisors will take the initiative to update their knowledge and skills on a regular basis and access 'update' training at least once every three years.

All research students must be given the name and contact details of at least one other member of Academic Staff from whom they may seek advice and support in the absence or unavailability of the main Supervisor, or in circumstances where a student finds the student/Supervisor relationship is not working well. (*Regulation 6.1g*)

This member of Academic Staff may be from outside the specific area of the student's research topic. The same appointment would normally continue throughout a student's full period of study. (*Regulation 6.1h*)

In the event that a Supervisor leaves the University during a student's research programme, every effort will be made to appoint an alternative Supervisor and, where possible and appropriate, to retain the involvement of the original Supervisor as an Associate Supervisor.

The names and contact details of a student's Supervisor, Associate Supervisor(s) and Postgraduate Research Tutor are displayed on the student's MAP homepage.

6.1 Responsibilities of Supervisors

The responsibilities of Supervisors include:

- a introducing the research student to the research environment, its facilities and operational procedures, and to other research students and relevant staff;
- b providing satisfactory, accurate and ongoing guidance and advice, and giving consideration to the appointment of additional Associate Supervisor(s) where this may be beneficial as the student's research progresses;
- c being responsible for monitoring the student's progress, mindful of the timing of the student's progression points and thesis submission date;
- d establishing and maintaining regular contact, at a frequency agreed with the student (normally at least every two weeks), and including structured interactions at least

- every 3 months to discuss and agree progress, and to report it formally (Regulation 8.1);
- e ensuring their reasonable accessibility to the student at other appropriate times when the student needs advice;
- f having input into the assessment of a student's development needs and regularly reviewing and amending those needs and advising students on their personal development planning;
- g providing timely, constructive and effective feedback on the student's work, including their overall progress;
- h ensuring that the student is made aware of lack of satisfactory progress on the research programme and the implications of this for the student;
- i ensuring that the student is aware of the need to conduct their research according to ethical principles, respecting any issues of confidentiality, and of the implications of research misconduct⁵, including plagiarism;
- j providing guidance on the maintenance of research records applicable to the nature of the research;
- k providing effective pastoral support and/or referring the student to other sources of such support, including student advisers, Graduate School staff, the Postgraduate Research Tutor and, where appropriate, support for mental health and well-being;
- l helping the student to interact with others working in the field of research, for example, encouraging the student to attend relevant conferences and supporting them in seeking funding for such events, or in potential career pathways; and, where appropriate, giving encouragement and guidance on the submission of conference papers and articles to refereed journals;
- m maintaining the necessary supervisory expertise, including the appropriate skills, to perform the role of Supervisor satisfactorily, supported by relevant continuing professional development opportunities.

6.2 Responsibilities of research students

Students are responsible for the content, completion and submission for examination of their thesis within the periods of study as prescribed in Regulations for their particular degree.

Students are also responsible for:

- a taking responsibility for their own personal and professional development and attending induction programmes as advised by their Supervisor or the Graduate School ;
- b ensuring that they are familiar with and comply with: University Regulations and College guidelines and procedures relating to their degree; relevant Codes of Practice and other University and College requirements (including health and safety advice, intellectual property and ethical research); the monitoring of progress; and terms of any sponsorship;
- c setting and keeping to timetables and deadlines, including planning and submitting work as and when required and generally maintaining satisfactory progress with the programme of research;
- d ensuring that in every year of enrolment they meet all of the University's requirements regarding administrative arrangements; for example, completing enrolment, re-enrolment and annual reports on progress;
- e discussing with their Supervisor the type of guidance and feedback they find most helpful, and agreeing a schedule of meetings for which they adequately prepare;

⁵ set out in detail in the University's Research Integrity Assurance Procedures in Appendix B

- f maintaining regular contact, normally at least every two weeks, with their Supervisor and initiating supervisory meetings where necessary;
- g in conjunction with their Supervisor and informed by the Vitae Researcher Development Statement⁶, identifying their training needs and attending training on research methods and other relevant topics, including personal and skills development opportunities;
- h maintaining research records in such a way that they can be accessed and understood by anyone with a legitimate need to see them;
- i deciding when to submit their thesis (after the minimum period of research and before the end of the maximum period of research specified in the Regulations), taking due account of the Supervisor's opinion;
- j ensuring that they understand the nature of their Supervisor's responsibilities (see section 6.1 above);
- k advising their supervisors of any illness, holidays or any other occasions when they will be absent from the University or from their study, or of any other circumstances or concerns likely to affect their work;
- l where possible, recognising when they need help and seeking it in a timely manner;
- m seeking advice from an International Advisor in The Hub if they have any queries about their student visa or immigration status (*international students only*).

Supervisors and students will complete individual Learning Agreements as an aide memoire to covering these points and as a document for future reference. A Training Needs Analysis will be completed at the same time as the Learning Agreement and will be reviewed at least annually. Template forms are provided in the Student Handbook.

7 Progress and Review Arrangements

Each student and their Supervisor are expected to be in regular contact, meeting, or interacting over a distance, normally at least every two weeks on average. At least every three months a student's progress should be formally reviewed by the Supervisor. Prior to the meeting, the student will be expected to provide the Supervisor with a detailed report of their progress during the previous three months, including, where appropriate, the methods used and the results obtained from their research. The recorded outcomes of the meetings, or other interaction if students are studying at some distance from the University, will be held on MAP. A template Record of Supervisory meeting form is provided in the Student Handbook and is available to download from MAP.

At the end of each year of research a report must be submitted to the Associate Dean Research on the performance of each research student, including details of the skills training undertaken by the student during the year and a review of forthcoming training needs, unless the student has been granted an exemption from skills training or completed it as part of a professional doctorate programme. (*Regulation 8.2a*)

For MPhil/PhD students, the annual report before the end of the first full-time year or second part-time year of research will contain a recommendation concerning the student's progression to either the MPhil or PhD degree programme, based on the student's Qualifying Report on the research work and a *viva voce* examination (see Regulations, Section 8: Reports). A Guide to Requirements for the Qualifying Report is provided in the Student Handbook. Professional Doctorate students will have a similar progression point specified for their programme. Doctor of Medicine (MD) students enrol on the MD

⁶ The Vitae Researcher Development Statement (RDS) is provided as an Appendix to the Student Handbook. Detailed information about the RDS and the associated Researcher Development Framework (RDF) is available on the Vitae website (www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf).

programme from the outset and submit a Qualifying Report to determine continued progression on the programme.

Before the end of the second year (fourth year for part-time students) PhD and professional doctorate students are required to complete a minimum of: an oral presentation of all or part of their research; *or* write up all or part of their research as a paper (without the requirement to submit for publication); *or* write up all or part of their research in the form of an empirical chapter that would constitute part of their thesis. The Supervisor will consult with the student about which task the student is expected to complete and structured feedback will be provided. The student is expected to write a brief report on what they have gained from completing the task. Template feedback forms for each of the progression tasks are included in the Student Handbook. The Graduate School is responsible for the monitoring of student performance and notifies students of their review timetable and of the outcomes of the key stages above.

The Regulations allow for leave of absence in appropriate circumstances (e.g. evidenced illness) and for an extension of up to 12 months beyond the normal duration of the research programme to finalise the submission of the thesis (subject to approval by the College Research Committee). Detailed information about the processes to be followed is contained in Student Handbooks.

8 Development of Research and Other Skills

The University considers skills training to be key to the development of independent, employable, researchers, and students are therefore expected to complete a minimum number of skills training hours during their research programme, as defined in Regulations and as agreed with their Supervisor during completion and review of the Training Needs Analysis. A list of the training undertaken is sent to the Examiners before the *viva voce* examination.

For professional doctorate programmes, the taught element of each programme satisfies the requirement for skills hours but students are nevertheless encouraged to take advantage of the additional opportunities available for personal development.

The University will provide training in research and generic skills appropriate, wherever possible, to a student's individual needs and as identified in the Training Needs Analysis initiated at the beginning of the first year as part of the Learning Agreement and reviewed at least annually thereafter. Training will normally be provided by the Colleges, and by the Graduate Development Team. Provision of skills training will be kept under review by Colleges as part of their annual review of research degree programmes, and by the Graduate School Management Committee.

Guidance, support and training will be provided to, and will be expected to be undertaken by, students who have opportunities for teaching, demonstrating and/or assessing. Details of how to access teaching/demonstrating opportunities in each College are provided in the Student Handbook.

9 Evaluation Mechanisms

As part of the annual programme evaluation process, Colleges will consider and, where necessary, respond to feedback from research students, graduates, examiners, employers, sponsors and other internal and external stakeholders. College Programme Evaluation Reports are subsequently considered by the Graduate School Management Committee.

Students will be given the opportunity to provide confidential individual feedback as well as the opportunity to take part in College and University committee meetings. Students will be informed of actions taken in response to their feedback.

Feedback from research students will be sought through the national Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) administered by [Advance HE](#). Students will be provided with feedback on the PRES results.

The Dean of the Graduate School will meet regularly with the Aston Postgraduate Research Society (APRS) Committee providing the opportunity for discussion with research student representatives from each College.

10 Assessment

The assessment of students is on the basis of an appropriate body of work, as specified in the Regulations for that award, and a *viva voce* examination conducted according to the guidance set out in Appendix C, Conduct of the *viva voce*. The requirements for the award are stated in Regulations and reference the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) doctoral qualification and master's degree descriptors.

Two Examiners are appointed for each student candidate and one Examiner must be external to the University. In the case of staff candidates, both Examiners must be external to the University.

The Internal Examiner may not be the student's Supervisor, an Associate Supervisor, or be otherwise involved in the supervision of the student e.g. a member of a supervisory team. (*Regulation 16.1d*)

The Examiners' role is critical in the assessment of research degrees, not only for the individual candidate but also for assuring the quality of the University's academic standards, and the Regulations specify detailed criteria for their appointment. All Examiners must be appropriately experienced in research as judged by the Associate Dean Research and a nominee of the Senate.

An External Examiner must have previous experience of successful PhD supervision [and] the examination team must have experience (i.e. normally three or more previous examinations) of examining doctoral research degree students. (*Regulations 16.1g and 16.1h*)

Recommendations for the appointment of Examiners must be submitted using the form designed for this purpose.

Neither the Internal nor the External Examiner should have had substantial co-authoring or collaborative involvement in the student's work, and neither of the Examiners' own work should be the focus of the student's thesis/portfolio. (*Regulation 16.1i*)

An External Examiner should not have been involved in collaborative research activities with the other Examiner or any member of the supervisory team within the five year period prior to the *viva voce* examination. (*Regulation 16.1j*)

Examiners will be requested to declare any personal conflict of interest which might preclude their appointment. (*Regulation 16.1k*)

All Examiners' appointments must be approved by the Senate or by the Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate. (*Regulation 16*)

Examiners must submit individual independent written reports on the student's thesis before the *viva voce* and a joint written report after the *viva voce*.

For all *viva voce*, an

independent, non-examining Chair normally should be appointed from the suitably qualified Academic Staff within the relevant College except for staff candidates when the Chair should be from a different College. The Chair should not have had a substantial involvement in the candidate's work or have been involved in the appointment of the Examiners, but should have experience of research degree assessment. Independent Chair appointments should be in accordance with Section 1 of the *Conduct of the viva voce examination on a research student's thesis/portfolio*. (*Regulation 17b*)

See Appendix C for the *Conduct of the viva voce examination on a research student's thesis/portfolio* document which provides further guidance.

The University takes a serious view of misconduct in research at any stage in the research degree programme and cases of alleged misconduct, which includes plagiarism and collusion, are dealt with under the University's Regulations on Student Discipline.

11 Complaints and Appeals

The University has approved procedures for dealing with complaints and appeals which may be found on the University's website and which will be referenced in the Student Handbook. The procedures will also be accessible from a student's MAP homepage. Research students who are recommended for withdrawal from the programme because of, for example, lack of satisfactory progress, including as a result of the examination of the Qualifying Report, will be provided with the opportunity to make representations to the Associate Dean Research and the Director of Research Degree Programmes, or equivalent (Regulation 11). If the outcome of the meeting is unsatisfactory to the student, they may appeal under the provisions of the University's Student Complaints or Academic Appeals Procedures.

Research students who are dissatisfied with their conditions of work or the quality of their supervision should wherever possible discuss the difficulties with their Supervisor. In doing so, it may be appropriate to refer to [this] University Code of Practice for Research Degrees. (*Regulation 28a*)

If a research student prefers not to discuss their concerns with the Supervisor, the student should approach the Associate Dean Research or their nominee or, where the Associate Dean Research is the Supervisor, the Executive Dean. (*Regulation 28b*)

Ultimately, a complaint may be referred under the procedures detailed in the Student Complaints Procedure.

The student may be accompanied or represented at investigative, representation or appeal meetings and will be made aware of the availability of independent advice from the Students' Union Advice and Representation Centre.

In cases where the University's internal complaints or appeals procedures have been exhausted, the student will be provided with the details of the Office of the Independent

Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA). The OIA is an independent scheme for the review of student complaints. The OIA cannot interfere with the operation of a University's academic judgement which is stated as being "not any judgment made by an academic; it is a judgment that is made about a matter where the opinion of an academic expert is essential."⁷.

Graduate School Management Committee will receive the University's annual reports on student appeals and complaints in order to review processes and guidance in place against any recommendations in the report.

References and Acknowledgements

- UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Advice and Guidance: Research Degrees
- Vitae Researcher Development Statement (RDS) - www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf
- Aston University General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis 2020/21

Last updated July 2020/SAS/Graduate School/AJB. Revised January 2021 to take account of changes to the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis approved by University Research Committee.

⁷Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education, Glossary: <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/glossary.aspx>

Appendix A: RESEARCH INTEGRITY POLICY

If you are consulting this document, please check <https://www2.aston.ac.uk/research/supporting-our-researchers/integrity-and-ethics/research-integrity-and-ethics> to ensure that it remains the most recent version.



Research Integrity Policy

January 2019

This document sets out the policy governing the allegations of breaches of integrity in the field of research.

January 2019

Title

Research Integrity Policy

Introduction and Context

The University's expects the highest standards of research integrity from the researchers we support, irrespective of the sources of their funding, their area of research, their experience as researchers, whether they are lone scholars or members of a research team or where the research is to be conducted.

Researchers can expect of the University:

- *a strong commitment to research integrity from its senior management;*
- *clearly stated standards and expectations;*
- *support to help researchers comply with standards of good research conduct;*
- *support to develop excellent researchers;*
- *oversight of the implementation of the Research Integrity Assurance Procedure; and*
- *a robust and fair approach to dealing with allegations of research misconduct.*

1. SCOPE OF THE POLICY

1.1 Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this Policy is to set out the standards of research integrity expected by the University from its researchers.

1.2 What is covered by the Policy

This Policy applies to all research undertaken by the individuals covered by this Policy.

1.3 Who is covered by the Policy

All those who conduct research as employees, students, independent contractors, consultants, visiting or emeritus members of staff or as members of staff on a joint clinical or honorary contract, irrespective of the sources of their funding, their area of research, their experience as researchers, whether they are lone scholars or members of a research team or where the research is to be conducted. This Policy does apply to allegations of plagiarism related to course assessment for students.

This Policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

1.4 Breach of this Policy

Any breach of this Policy will be addressed in accordance with the Research Integrity Assurance Procedure. A serious breach may amount to gross misconduct, and could therefore result in summary dismissal.

The University will consider allegations of a breach of this Policy against a member of staff when they were not working at the University but may (acting reasonably) determine that it is not possible to undertake a fair investigation of those allegations.

1.5 Policy Ownership

Research Committee has approved this Policy, the Pro Vice Chancellor Research is the Executive sponsor and the Associate Pro Vice Chancellor Research Integrity is the officer responsible for the Policy. Any questions about the operation of this Policy or any concerns that the Policy has not been followed should be referred in the first instance to the Associate Pro Vice Chancellor Research Integrity.

2. THE POLICY STATEMENT

The guiding principles of this Policy are to ensure that the University maintains the highest standards of research integrity.

Guiding Principles of Research Integrity

Excellence

Researchers are expected to strive for excellence when conducting their research; aiming to design, conduct, produce and disseminate work of the highest quality and ethical standards.

Honesty

Researchers must be honest in respect of their own actions and in their responses to the actions of others. This applies to the whole range of research activity including:

- *applying for funding;*
- *experimental and protocol design;*
- *generating, recording, analysing and interpreting data;*
- *publishing and exploiting results;*
- *acknowledging the direct and indirect contributions of colleagues, collaborators and others; and*
- *reporting cases of suspected misconduct in a responsible and appropriate manner.*

Openness

Researchers must be open when conducting and communicating their research (subject to the terms and conditions of any research contracts. the protection of intellectual property and commercial exploitation and the University's IP Policy). This includes:

- *the disclosure of any conflicts of interest;*
- *the reporting of research data collection methods;*
- *the analysis and interpretation of data;*
- *making all research findings widely available (including sharing negative results as appropriate);*
- *disseminating research in a way that will have the widest impact; and*
- *promoting public engagement/involvement in research.*

Rigour

Researchers must be thorough and meticulous in performing their research. Care must be taken:

- *to use the appropriate methods;*
- *to adhere to an agreed protocol (where appropriate);*
- *when drawing interpretations and conclusions from the research; and*
- *when communicating the results.*

Safety

All research should be conducted in a manner which, so far as is reasonably practicable, is safe for researchers, participants, the University and the environment. Researchers must familiarise themselves, and comply with, the obligations set down by the University in its Health and Safety Policy and Procedures.

Ethical responsibility

Researchers should have respect for all participants in, and subjects of, research including humans, animals, the environment and cultural objects. The University expects all researchers to consider the ethical implications of their research and to be aware of their responsibilities to society, the environment, their profession, the University, research participants and the organisation(s) funding the research in accordance with the University Ethics Framework and the University Research Ethics Regulations and Procedures.

Responsible management

Established researchers are responsible for nurturing researchers of the future; fostering a constructive and supportive environment without undue pressure and ensuring that appropriate supervision, mentoring and training are provided.

Regulatory compliance

Researchers are expected to make themselves aware of, and comply with, any legislation or regulations that govern their research. This includes, but is not limited to:

- *General Data Protection Regulation, Data Protection Act 2018 and the University's Data Protection Policy and Procedures and Records Management Policy and Procedures;*
- *The Medicines for Human Use (Clinical Trials) Regulations 2004;*
- *Human Tissue Act 2004 and the University's Quality Manual.*

Professional standards

Researchers should observe the standards of practice set out in guidelines published by professional societies, funding agencies and other relevant bodies, where appropriate and available. They must ensure that they have the necessary skills and training to conduct the research.

Report research misconduct

Researchers should be aware of the extreme seriousness of research misconduct. Staff and students of the University have an obligation to report suspected research misconduct in accordance with the University's Research Integrity Assurance Procedure.

3. RELATIONSHIP TO EXISTING POLICIES

This Policy should be used in conjunction with other relevant University policies and documents including:

- *Ethics Framework;*
- *Research Ethics Regulations and Procedures*
- *Health and Safety Policy and Procedures;*
- *IP Policy;*
- *"Speak-up" Policy;*
- *Research Data Management Policy;*
- *Data Protection Policy and Procedures; and*
- *Records Management Policy and Procedures.*

Please contact the Office of the General Counsel if any conflict is identified between the University's policies and procedures and any external guidance.

4. IMPLEMENTATION

It is expected that Schools led by the Associate Dean Research will implement practices to ensure compliance with this Policy and review them regularly.

Appendix B: RESEARCH INTEGRITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES

If you are consulting this document, please check <https://www2.aston.ac.uk/research/research-integrity> to ensure that it remains the most recent version.

Research Integrity Assurance Procedures

1. Scope of the Procedures

The Procedures assures the University's compliance with its Research Integrity Policy.

1.1 Purpose of the Procedures

The Procedures assure the University's compliance with its Research Integrity Policy.

1.2 What is covered by the Procedures

The Procedures apply to all research undertaken by those covered by the Research Integrity Policy and these Procedures.

1.3 Who is covered by the Procedures

All those who conduct research as employees, students, independent contractors, consultants, visiting or emeritus members of staff or as members of staff on a joint clinical or honorary contract, irrespective of the sources of their funding, their area of research, their experience as researchers, whether they are lone scholars or members of a research team or where the research is to be conducted. These Procedures apply to allegations of plagiarism related to course assessment for students.

These Procedures do not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

2. Owner

Research Committee has approved the Procedures, the Pro Vice Chancellor Research is the Executive sponsor and the Associate Pro Vice Chancellor Research Integrity is the officer responsible for the Procedures. Any questions about the operation of the Procedures or any concerns that the Procedures have not been followed should be referred in the first instance to the Associate Pro Vice Chancellor Research Integrity.

3. Detailed Procedures Statement

The detailed Procedures are divided into sections that relate to specific stages of the process:

Section 4: What is Research Misconduct and what is a Breach of Research Integrity?

Section 5: How to raise a concern

Section 6: Researcher review

Section 7: Investigation

Section 8: Determination of a Breach of Research Integrity

Section 9: Determination of Research Misconduct

Section 10: Definitions

4. What is Research Misconduct and what is a Breach of Research Integrity?

4.1 Research misconduct is characterised as behaviours or actions that fall short of the standards of ethics, research and scholarship required to ensure that the integrity of research is upheld. It can cause harm to people and the environment, wastes resources, undermines the research record

and damages the credibility of research. We recognise that academic freedom is fundamental to the production of excellent research. This means that responsibility for ensuring that no misconduct occurs rests primarily with individual researchers.

4.2 Research misconduct can take many forms, including:

4.2.1 fabrication: making up results, other outputs (for example, artefacts) or aspects of research, including documentation and participant consent, and presenting and/or recording them as if they were real

4.2.2 falsification: inappropriately manipulating and/or selecting research processes, materials, equipment, data, imagery and/or consents

4.2.3 plagiarism: using other people's ideas, intellectual property or work (written or otherwise) without acknowledgement or permission

4.2.4 failure to meet: legal, ethical and professional obligations, for example:

- not observing legal, ethical and other requirements for human research participants, animal subjects, or human organs or tissue used in research, or for the protection of the environment
- breach of duty of care for humans involved in research whether deliberately, recklessly or by gross negligence, including failure to obtain appropriate informed consent
- misuse of personal data, including inappropriate disclosures of the identity of research participants and other breaches of confidentiality
- improper conduct in peer review of research proposals, results or manuscripts submitted for publication. This includes failure to disclose conflicts of interest; inadequate disclosure of clearly limited competence; misappropriation of the content of material; and breach of confidentiality or abuse of material provided in confidence for the purposes of peer review.

4.2.5 misrepresentation of:

- data, including suppression of relevant results/data or knowingly, recklessly or by gross negligence presenting a flawed interpretation of data
- involvement, including inappropriate claims to authorship or attribution of work and denial of authorship/attribution to persons who have made an appropriate contribution
- interests, including failure to declare competing interests of researchers or funders of a study; qualifications, experience and/or credentials
- publication history, through undisclosed duplication of publication, including undisclosed duplicate submission of manuscripts for publication.

4.2.6 improper dealing with allegations of misconduct: failing to address possible infringements, such as attempts to cover up misconduct and reprisals against whistle-blowers, or failing to adhere appropriately to agreed procedures in the investigation of alleged research misconduct accepted as a condition of funding. Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct includes the inappropriate censoring of parties through the use of legal instruments, such as non-disclosure agreements.

Honest errors and differences in, for example, research methodology or interpretations do not constitute research misconduct.

4.3 All relevant definitions are included in Section 10.

5. How to raise a concern

5.1 Notwithstanding the University's Whistleblowing Policy, all employees and students, including those holding honorary contracts, are required to report, and individuals authorised to work in University premises have a responsibility to report to the University any concerns about misconduct in research whether this has been witnessed or for which there are reasonable grounds for suspicion. Failure by a member of staff or student to report research misconduct may constitute concealment of misconduct in research.

- 5.2 Subject to paragraph 5.3, Suspected Research Misconduct or Breaches of Research Integrity should be reported in writing to:

Pro Vice Chancellor Research
Main Building
Aston University
Aston Triangle
B4 7ET

research_governance@aston.ac.uk or via the online form available.

- 5.3 Suspected Research Misconduct or Breaches of Research Integrity relating to the Pro Vice Chancellor Research should be reported in writing to Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

Concerns should be reported in good faith and accompanied by supporting evidence that substantiates the concerns.

- 5.4 Concerns about Research Misconduct or Breaches of Research Integrity can only be investigated through this process. Where concerns of Research Misconduct or Breaches of Research Integrity have been raised with someone other than the Pro Vice Chancellor Research, that person must take responsibility for informing the Pro Vice Chancellor Research.

- 5.5 The Pro Vice Chancellor Research will refer all reported concerns of Research Misconduct and Breaches of Research Integrity in accordance with these Procedures.

6. Researcher review

- 6.1 The Pro Vice Chancellor Research will refer the concern of Research Misconduct or Breach of Research Integrity to the Designated Officer.

- 6.2 The Designated Officer will determine whether the concern relates to a Breach of Research Integrity that amounts to Poor Research Practice for the purposes of these Procedures. If the Designated Officer makes such a determination, they may approach the researcher and request that the researcher reviews any related research and associated publications and takes any corrective actions arising from that self-review.

- 6.3 This self-review by the researcher may identify the requirement for an improvement plan that would be led by the relevant supervisor and/or School as required.

7. Investigation

- 7.1 Where the Designated Officer determines that the allegation of Research Misconduct or Breach of Research Integrity does not amount to Poor Research Practice, the Designated Officer will conduct an investigation.

- 7.1.1 In conducting an investigation, the Designated Officer may obtain confidential advice from internal and/or external independent experts in the research area concerned, request relevant evidence from both the complainant and the person/s whom the allegation has been made against. This may include experimental material, names of witnesses, IT records and other documents subject to the prior approval of the General Counsel or their nominee.

- 7.1.2 Failure to provide the requested information may be considered misconduct or gross misconduct.

- 7.2 In determining whether there is a case to answer, the Designated Officer will consider whether the allegations, if proven, could constitute Research Misconduct.

- 7.3 Following the investigation, the Designated Officer may form any of the following views:

- 7.3.1 there is no substance to the allegation; or

- 7.3.2 the case is appropriate for researcher review; or
- 7.3.3 there is a case of Poor Research Practice; or
- 7.3.4 there is a case of a Breach of Research Integrity; or
- 7.3.5 there is a case of Research Misconduct; or
- 7.3.6 there may be substance to the allegation but this is subject to a separate University policy or procedure so referral is required in accordance with that policy or procedure.

7.4 Even if the person accused of non-compliance has resigned from the University, an investigation to establish the facts may be pursued by the Designated Officer. Distortions of the research record may need to be rectified, whether or not the person involved remains at the University.

7.5 The Designated Officer will report the outcome of the investigation to the person who made the allegation, to the person against whom the allegation was made, and to the Pro Vice Chancellor Research to the fullest extent permissible by law.

8. Determination of a Breach of Research Integrity

Where the Designated Officer determines that there is a case of a Breach of Research Integrity, the Designated Officer may refer the matter under the University's disciplinary procedures, where it may be dealt with as a matter of gross misconduct.

9. Determination of Research Misconduct

9.1 Where the Designated Officer determines that there is a case of Research Misconduct, the Designated Officer may take the following action:

9.1.1 Refer the matter to the Pro Vice Chancellor Research, with a recommendation for a formal investigation. The Formal investigation should be undertaken by a panel of three members where at least one member is an external to Aston University. The formal investigation will be in line with UK Research Integrity Office [procedure for the investigation of misconduct in research](#). This has been adopted by universities and NHS Trusts, endorsed by funding bodies and used to investigate allegations of research misconduct.

The Pro Vice Chancellor Research will determine how to proceed in accordance with the relevant agreement or other relevant procedures, for example, if non staff are involved.

9.1.1.1 The Pro Vice Chancellor Research will determine how to proceed in accordance with the relevant agreement or other relevant procedures, for example, if non staff are involved.

9.1.1.2 The Pro Vice Chancellor Research may refer the matter under the University's disciplinary procedures, where it may be dealt with as a matter of gross misconduct.

9.1.1.3 The Designated Officer will provide all correspondence and information collected as part of the investigation to the Pro Vice Chancellor Research.

9.1.2 Ensure that relevant funding agencies, journals and other media through which the research in question was reported are informed of the determination of a case of Research Misconduct to the fullest extent permissible by law.

10. Definitions

Designated Officer	An experienced senior staff member nominated by the Pro Vice Chancellor Research to provide independent and informed guidance to university staff regarding research integrity and associated courses of action. The Designated Officer will have research experience, analytical skills, empathy, knowledge of the
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	University's policies and management structure and a familiarity with accepted practice in research. The Designated Officer will take advice from subject matter experts including the Director of Governance and the General Counsel.
Poor Research Practice	This encompasses the intention to deceive and honest differences of interpretation or judgement in the management of research, or honest errors in the collection, evaluation or reporting of research results that are minor or unintentional.
The Concordat	The concordat to support research integrity published by UniversitiesUK.
The Guidance	The RCUK Policy and Guidelines on Governance of Good Research Conduct.

Appendix C: Conduct of the *viva voce* examination on a research student's thesis/portfolio

The following paragraphs present guidance for the arrangements for and conduct of the *viva voce*; references to Regulations are to the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis.

1. The Chair of the *Viva Voce*

An independent, non-examining Chair should be appointed for all *viva voce*. The Chair should be selected by the College's Associate Dean Research from a pool of suitably qualified Academic Staff who have experience of research degree assessment and are familiar with the regulatory requirements.

The Chair should be independent in that he or she

should not have had a substantial direct involvement in the candidate's work or have been involved in the appointment of the Examiners (*Regulation 17b*)

The Chair must be impartial and cannot therefore be a member of the student's supervisory team or the Internal Examiner, and must be from a different research area. The Chair must not be nominated by the Supervisor or the Internal Examiner. In the case of a staff candidate, the Chair should be from a different College (*Regulation 17b*).

In some circumstances, for example where both Examiners are external to Aston, an 'experienced' Independent Chair may be required. An experienced Independent Chair will be a member of Aston Academic Staff who, at the time their appointment is recommended for approval, has:

- chaired an Aston University *viva voce* examination at the same level (research Masters or doctorate) within the previous five years; and
- been an External Examiner at a *viva voce* examination for a UK award at the same level (research Masters or doctorate) within the previous ten years.

2. The Role of the Independent Chair

The role of the Independent Chair is to:

- i) meet with the Examiners at least 20 minutes before the *viva voce* examination to hear their proposed agenda for the conduct of the examination;
- ii) ensure the *viva voce* examination is conducted in an open, professional, and non-intimidating manner by all parties involved;
- iii) be prepared to intervene in the process if the above requirements are not complied with;
- iv) ensure that only those parties who should be actively involved in the *viva voce* process are participating and that other attending parties (such as a Supervisor) do not take an active role and leave the meeting at the appropriate time, i.e. with the student;
- v) ensure that the candidate has an opportunity to defend the thesis;
- vi) suggest appropriate breaks in particularly long examinations and be mindful of the impact of a long examination on those attending;
- vii) provide an opinion on points of order or University Regulations if requested to do so by the Examiners or the student and in circumstances where it is necessary to do so in order to ensure that appropriate procedures are not breached;

- viii) take the lead in informing the candidate of the overall outcome, deferring to the Examiners for detailed feedback, and ensuring that the outcome is clearly communicated and understood by the student;
- ix) sign at the end of the *viva voce* examination to confirm that the examination was conducted fairly, professionally, and without bias.

It is not the role of the Independent Chair to:

- i) receive a copy of the thesis to be examined;

The independent non-examining Chair must not be sent a copy of the thesis.
(*Regulation 18a*)

- ii) be involved in the examination of the candidate;
- iii) contribute to the academic examination of the thesis;
- iv) take part in the discussions as to outcome of the assessment.

3. The Role of the Examiners

Prior to the *viva voce* examination (on receipt of the thesis) the Examiners will satisfy themselves that they have the relevant expertise to examine the thesis and will not have a conflict of interest (see Regulation 1.5 of the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis) in doing so. If that is not the case, the Examiner will inform the Graduate School Office as soon as possible.

The role of the Examiners is to:

- i) determine whether the candidate's work has met the requirements for the award being examined;
- ii) be confident, via the *viva voce* process, that the thesis is the candidate's own work and that the candidate is able to defend it.

The External Examiner is also responsible for assuring that the University's processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards are robust and equitable compared with those of other universities.

4. Arrangements for the *Viva Voce*

The *viva voce* examination shall normally be held at least three weeks and no more than three months after the submission of the thesis/portfolio. (*Regulation 15.3*)

The Supervisor should notify the Examiners, the student, and the Independent Chair, in writing, giving at least two weeks' notice, of the date, time, place and names of those attending the *viva voce* examination. Members of the supervisory team should not host meals for Examiners; this should be done by either the Internal Examiner or the Independent Chair.

The *viva voce* examination will normally take place on the University campus. It should be held in a suitable room which ensures privacy and lack of distraction or interruption from others, with an appropriate amount of time being set aside for the meeting. There should be a separate waiting area for the candidate.

It is the responsibility of the research student to advise the Examiners, in writing, through the Graduate School Office, before the final *viva voce* examination, of any factors which may affect their performance. (*Regulation 18d*)

Reasonable adjustments may be made where required, in accordance with guidance received from the [University's Enabling Team](#).

5. Purpose/Aim of the *Viva Voce*

- i) Provides the student with an opportunity to defend their thesis;
- ii) assists the Examiners in their decision as to whether or not the student has met the requirements for the degree;
- iii) examines the general field within which the subject of the thesis lies;
- iv) allows detailed discussion of the thesis;
- v) explores the ideas and theories proposed in the thesis;
- vi) clarifies points of ambiguity;
- vii) satisfies the Examiners that the thesis is the student's own work and, where applicable, the extent of any collaboration.

6. Conduct of the *Viva Voce*

- i) If any of those who should be attending are unable to be present, then the *viva voce* must normally be re-arranged;
- ii) time should be made available on the day of, and before the *viva voce*, for the Examiners to meet and discuss their preliminary reports and to discuss the approach to the examination, for example the main areas to be explored with the candidate and the order in which they will be raised;
- iii) the Examiners will confirm their agenda for the examination with the Chair before the examination commences;
- iv) the Chair should introduce those present, putting them at their ease, explaining the form the *viva voce* will take and what happens afterwards. The Chair will only intervene if there is a danger of misunderstanding (including of regulatory matters), unfairness, bias or unprofessional behaviour, but should not hesitate to do so if this is the case;
- v) each Examiner should contribute, but with the External Examiner taking the lead;
- vi) there are no rules governing the length of the *viva voce*. It is at the Examiners' discretion to make the *viva voce* as long or as short as they think necessary but around two hours is typical and it should not normally be expected to exceed four hours. Short breaks are permitted if necessary/requested;
- vii) there may be intense questioning, but it should be non-aggressive. Wherever possible, Examiners should ask questions in a constructive way. If, in the opinion of the Chair, the questioning becomes aggressive, they should intervene;
- viii) the Supervisor may be invited by the Examiners or the Independent Chair to participate in discussions but will be required to leave before any decision is taken, and should not sign any of the Examiners' reports or recommendations (*Regulation 17b*);
- ix) no-one, at any time, should indicate the likely outcome.

7. After the *Viva Voce*

- i) The candidate and Supervisor (if present) should be asked to withdraw. The Supervisor must not be involved in any of the deliberations or decision-making;
- ii) the Examiners should deliberate in private, with the Chair observing the discussion and providing guidance on regulatory matters when appropriate but not contributing to the academic examination of the thesis;
- iii) the Examiners may invite the student and Supervisor to hear the recommendation (noting that this is provisional only). Care should be taken to convey the recommendation clearly and in accordance with the Regulations (see section 8 below: 'Outcomes of the Examination'). The Chair will take the lead in informing the candidate of the recommendation;

- iv) the Examiners' Reports on the *viva voce* examination and the Joint Recommendation should be completed and submitted to the [Graduate School Office](#), together with an outline of any revisions or required amendments, ideally immediately after the conclusion of the *viva voce*;
- v) the Independent Chair should sign the Examiners' Joint Recommendation on the *viva voce* examination to indicate whether or not the examination was conducted fairly, professionally and without bias;
- vi) all Examiners' recommendations must be submitted to the Senate or the Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate, through the Graduate School Office (*Regulations 19a and 23*);
- vii) External Examiners are invited to complete a separate report to provide feedback on the processes and arrangements for the examination.

8. Outcomes of the Examination

8.1 Satisfactory

A satisfactory recommendation will only be made in cases where the Examiners are satisfied that the quality of the thesis and the defence of it at the *viva voce* examination have met the requirements for the degree (General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis, Regulation 1.2).

(*Regulations*)

19.1 Satisfactory

- a If the Examiners are satisfied with the thesis/portfolio and with the student's performance at the *viva voce* examination (or written examination, if Regulation 18(e) is used), they must jointly recommend the award of the degree. The bound thesis should be submitted within one month.
- b The Examiners may recommend the award of MSc/MA (by Research) with distinction if they are satisfied that the thesis is of exceptional quality.
- c The Examiners may not recommend the award of MD/PhD/professional doctorate to a student unless the student submitted for that award.

19.2 Satisfactory subject to Revisions

If the Examiners are satisfied with the thesis/portfolio and with the student's performance at the *viva voce* examination but require revisions to be made to the thesis before it is bound, they must make one of the following joint recommendations and inform the student accordingly:

- a Doctoral Submission
 - i That the degree of MD/PhD/professional doctorate be awarded on completion of revisions within three months (see Regulation 20b);
 - ii That the degree of MD/PhD/professional doctorate, be awarded on completion of revisions within six months (see Regulation 20b).
- b MPhil Submission
 - i That the degree of MPhil be awarded on completion of revisions within three months (see Regulation 20b);
 - ii That the degree of MPhil be awarded on completion of revisions within six months (see Regulation 20b).
- c MSc/MA (by Research) Submission
 - i That the degree of MSc/MA (by Research) be awarded on completion of revisions, with 'distinction';

- ii That the degree of MSc/MA (by Research) be awarded on completion of revisions, without 'distinction'.

19.3 Unsatisfactory

If the Examiners are not satisfied with the thesis/portfolio (irrespective of the student's performance at the *viva voce* examination), they must make one of the following joint recommendations and inform the student accordingly:

- a Doctoral Submission
 - i that the student be permitted to submit a revised thesis/portfolio for re-examination within one year for the degree of MD/PhD/professional doctorate (see Regulation 21a);
 - ii that the degree of MPhil be awarded (PhD submission only);
 - iii that the degree of MPhil be awarded (PhD submission only) on completion of revisions within three or six months (see Regulation 20b);
 - iv that the student be permitted to submit a revised thesis/portfolio within one year for re-examination for the degree of MPhil (PhD submission only);
 - v that no degree be awarded;
 - vi that the unsuccessful professional doctorate thesis or portfolio be forwarded to the relevant Board of Examiners for consideration as a Master's dissertation (in cases where there is a linked Masters only).
- b MPhil Submission
 - i that the student be permitted to submit a revised thesis for re-examination within one year for the degree of MPhil (see Regulation 21a);
 - ii that no degree be awarded.
- c MSc/MA (by Research) Submission
 - i that the student be permitted to submit a revised thesis for re-examination for the degree of MSc/MA (by Research) within six months of the date of the *viva voce*. In such cases no distinction may be awarded;
 - ii that no degree be awarded.

19.4 No Agreed Recommendation

If the Examiners are unable to agree upon one of the joint recommendations in Regulation 19.1, 19.2 or 19.3 above, they must submit individual reports to the Senate or the Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate through the Graduate School Office, making clear the reasons for their disagreement (see Regulation 16.3).

16.3 Referee Examiner

If the Examiners are unable to agree upon a recommendation an External Referee Examiner nominated by the Supervisor and approved by the Associate Dean Research will be appointed by the Senate, or by the Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate, to make an independent report upon the thesis/portfolio (see Regulations 19.4 and 23.4).

8.3 Revisions within three or six months

20 COMPLETION OF REVISIONS

- a The Examiners shall provide the student with details of the revisions required to a thesis/portfolio within two weeks of the date of the *viva voce* examination.
- b Revisions to a thesis/portfolio must be completed by the student in accordance with the wishes of the Examiners within an agreed timescale of three or six months from the date of the *viva voce* examination. For revisions to an MSc/MA (by Research) thesis a shorter timescale may be agreed by the Examiners, with the maximum being three months.

- c The Examiners must confirm that the revisions have been completed to their satisfaction before their recommendation is forwarded to the Senate or the Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate.
- d The External Examiner may authorise the Internal Examiner to approve the student's completion of revisions. If there are two External Examiners (in the case of a staff candidate) one may authorise the other to approve the student's completion of revisions.
- e The Supervisor will provide guidance on the correction of revisions at the request of the student.

The period of time given for revisions should reflect the amount of work involved, rather than the individual circumstances of the student. It should not be influenced by whether the candidate was previously full- or part-time.

Revisions are not expected to require a major re-working of, or major additions to, the thesis. They will vary from thesis to thesis but may include: typographical errors; inclusion of a small amount of additional material; revisions to some sections of the text; further statistical analysis.

8.4 Submission of a revised thesis for re-examination (Resubmission)

In circumstances where the Examiners believe that the standard for the award may be reached by a significant reworking of the thesis/portfolio, for example additional experimental work or data analysis, they may decide to allow the candidate to submit a revised thesis for re-examination.

21 RESUBMISSION OF A REVISED THESIS/PORTFOLIO FOR RE-EXAMINATION

- a Major or extensive defects in the content or presentation of the research entailing resubmission and re-examination of the MPhil or doctoral thesis/portfolio must be rectified within one year of the date of the *viva voce* examination. This time limit is applicable to both full-time and part-time research students.
- b Major or extensive defects in the content or presentation of the research entailing resubmission and re-examination of the MSc/MA (by Research) thesis should be rectified within six months of the date of the *viva voce* examination.
- c The Examiners must provide the student with details of the required amendments, in writing, when making their recommendation to the Senate or the Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate. This should normally be within two weeks of the date of the *viva voce* examination.
- d Students should submit a commentary with their revised thesis/portfolio indicating how the amendments required by the Examiners have been addressed.
- e The student's Supervisor will provide appropriate and reasonable guidance on the revision of the thesis.

22 RE-EXAMINATION OF A REVISED THESIS/PORTFOLIO

The examination procedure must be as specified in Regulations 17 and 18, except where modified by the following provisions:

- a the resubmitted thesis/portfolio must be examined by the previously appointed Examiners unless the Senate or the Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate is satisfied that there is a sound case for the replacement of any Examiner(s). An Internal Examiner who has since left the University and is no longer a member of the Academic Staff may continue in the role for the student concerned;
- b the appointment of any replacement Examiner(s) must be in accordance with Regulation 16;
- c the Examiners may require the student to attend a *viva voce* examination on the resubmitted thesis/portfolio.

23 EXAMINERS' RECOMMENDATIONS ON A RESUBMITTED THESIS/PORTFOLIO

All Examiners' recommendations must be submitted to the Senate or the Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate, through the Graduate School Office.

The Examiners should normally determine their recommendation within three months of the student resubmitting their thesis/portfolio.

23.1 Satisfactory

- a If the Examiners are satisfied with the revised thesis/portfolio (and with the student's performance at the *viva voce* examination, if required, or written examination if Regulation 18e is used), they shall jointly recommend the award of the degree. The bound thesis should be submitted within one month.
- b The Examiners may not recommend the award of PhD to a student submitting a revised thesis/portfolio for the degree of MPhil.
- c The Examiners may not recommend an award 'with distinction' to a student submitting a revised thesis/portfolio for the degree of MSc (by Research).

23.2 Satisfactory subject to Revisions

If the Examiners are satisfied with the thesis/portfolio and, where applicable, with the student's performance at the *viva voce* examination but require revisions to be made to the thesis before it is bound, they must make one of the following joint recommendations and inform the student accordingly:

- a Resubmission for Doctorate
 - i That the degree of MD/PhD/professional doctorate be awarded on completion of revisions within three months (see Regulation 20b);
 - ii That the degree of MD/PhD/professional doctorate be awarded on completion of revisions within six months (see Regulation 20b).
- b Resubmission for MPhil
 - i That the degree of MPhil be awarded on completion of revisions within three months (see Regulation 20b);
 - ii That the degree of MPhil be awarded on completion of revisions within six months (see Regulation 20b).
- c Resubmission for MSc/MA (by Research)
 - i That the degree of MSc/MA (by Research) be awarded on completion of revisions within a maximum timescale of three months. The award may not be made 'with distinction'.

23.3 Unsatisfactory

If the Examiners are not satisfied with the thesis/portfolio (irrespective of the student's performance at the *viva voce* examination, if required), they shall make one of the following recommendations and inform the student accordingly:

- a Resubmission for doctorate
 - i that the degree of MPhil be awarded (PhD only),
 - ii that the degree of MPhil be awarded (PhD only) on completion of revisions within three or six months (see Regulation 20b),
 - iii that the unsuccessful professional doctorate thesis or portfolio be forwarded to the relevant Board of Examiners for consideration as a Master's dissertation (in cases where there is a linked Masters only),
 - iv that no degree be awarded.
- b Resubmission for MPhil

- i that no degree be awarded.

- c Resubmission for MSc/MA (by Research)

- i that no degree be awarded.

23.4 No Agreed Recommendation

If the Examiners are unable to agree upon one of the joint recommendations in Regulation 23.1, 23.2 or 23.3 above, they must submit individual reports to the Senate, or the Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate, through the Graduate School Office, making clear the reasons for their disagreement (see Regulation 16.3).

16.3 Referee Examiner

If the Examiners are unable to agree upon a recommendation an External Referee Examiner nominated by the Supervisor and approved by the Associate Dean Research will be appointed by the Senate, or by the Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate, to make an independent report upon the thesis/portfolio (see Regulations 19.4 and 23.4).

Last updated (SAS/Graduate School/AJB) July 2020



General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis

AU-GSMC-19-2628-C

Applicable to postgraduate students in all years of
research degree programmes

2020-21



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Policy Summary

These General Regulations, approved by the University Research Committee, set out the requirements for postgraduate research degree programmes and awards assessed by thesis (MSc or MA (by Research); Master of Philosophy (MPhil); Doctor of Philosophy (PhD); Doctor of Medicine (MD) and professional doctorates), including:

- Entry requirements and regulations on the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).
- The characteristics of different types of postgraduate research degree programmes, including MSc/MA (by Research) and professional doctorates.
- The typical duration of postgraduate research degree programmes.
- The requirements for progression and thesis submission.
- The requirements for the appointment of Examiners of research degree programmes.
- Recommendations available to Examiners of research degree programmes.

Related Regulations, Policies, and Guidance

These general regulations should be read in conjunction with the University's [General Regulations for the Presentation of Theses](#) and the [Code of Practice for Research Degrees](#).

General regulations for other types of programmes operated by the University are available on the [general regulations webpage](#).

Version Control

Reference Number	Version	Responsible Officer	Approved by	Approval Date	Effective Date
AU-GSMC-18-1701	A	Alison Birch	University Research Committee	July 2019	September 2019
AU-GSMC-19-2628	B	Alison Birch	University Research Committee	July 2020	September 2020
AU-GSMC-19-2628	C	Alison Birch	University Research Committee	October 2020	October 2020

1 GENERAL

1.1 Admission to the degree

Students of the University may be admitted by the Senate to the degrees of MSc or MA (by Research), Master of Philosophy (MPhil), Doctor of Medicine (MD), Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) or a professional doctorate (e.g. Doctor of Business Administration (DBA), Doctor of Education (EdD), Doctor of Optometry (DOptom), Doctor of Hearing Therapy (DHearing Therapy)) on complying with the requirements of these Regulations, with the University's Code of Practice for Research Degrees, and with such Ordinances and other Regulations as are relevant.

1.2 Nature of the degree and requirements for the award

a MSc or MA (by Research) and MPhil

The degree of MSc/MA (by Research) or Master of Philosophy may be awarded to a student whose postgraduate research work represents a contribution to knowledge and shows a critical appreciation of existing knowledge in the field. The work must be communicated coherently in a thesis presented in a critical, literary and orderly way and, where appropriate, must show evidence of adequate analysis and discussion of results.

Master's degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated (Level 7, QAA [Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications](#)):

- i a systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study or area of professional practice
- ii a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship
- iii originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline
- iv conceptual understanding that enables the student:
 - to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline
 - to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.

b PhD

The degree of Doctor of Philosophy may be awarded to a student whose postgraduate research work represents a substantial original contribution to knowledge, shows a critical appreciation of existing knowledge in the field and contains publishable elements. The work must be communicated coherently in a thesis presented in a critical, literary and orderly way and must show evidence of adequate analysis and discussion of results.

Doctoral degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated (Level 8, QAA [Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications](#)):

- i the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication

- ii a systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice
- iii the general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems
- iv a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.

c MD

The degree of Doctor of Medicine may be awarded to a student whose postgraduate research work represents a substantial original contribution to medical or biomedical science knowledge, shows a critical appreciation of existing knowledge in the field and contains publishable elements. The work must be communicated coherently in a thesis presented in a critical, literary and orderly way and must show evidence of adequate analysis and discussion of results.

The expectations of doctoral candidates are stated in b, i-iv, above.

d Professional Doctorates (DBA, DOptom, DOPhSc, PharmD, DHearing Therapy, EdD)

The professional doctorate is equivalent to PhD standard (Level 8, QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications). It is a doctoral level qualification for professionals working in a particular field which aims to aid the dissemination, development and management of a range of professional practice and policy development. The research thesis or portfolio results in a substantial and original contribution to knowledge (either theoretical or applied to professional practice), shows a critical appreciation of existing knowledge in the field and contains publishable elements. The structures of professional doctorates, which may vary in the size of taught and research components, are detailed in programme descriptions for each award. Taught components must be passed, along with the research thesis or portfolio, for the award of the professional doctorate.

The expectations of doctoral candidates are stated in b, i-iv, above.

1.3 Qualification for the degree

In order to qualify for the award of a degree by research and thesis a student must have:

- a enrolled as a research student of the University,
- b pursued a course of research within the time limits prescribed in these Regulations,
- c presented a satisfactory thesis or portfolio upon the subject of the research,
- d satisfactorily undergone a *viva voce* examination unless, in extraordinary circumstances, a written examination has been substituted under the provisions of Regulation 18e,
- e paid the appropriate fees and discharged all other obligations to the University.

1.4 The requirements for all Aston University Qualifications, including credits, and Levels of awards, are detailed in [Aston University Credit and Qualifications Framework](#).

1.5 Conflicts of interest

- a A conflict of interest exists where, to an independent observer of a situation, a person's self-interest may cast doubt on their ability to take impartial and objective actions or decisions in a professional context. Examples of conflict of interest include personal and financial relationships.

- b Research students and staff involved with research degree programmes are responsible for taking appropriate steps to avoid potential or perceived conflicts of interest at all stages of the programme: application, admission, supervision, progression and examination.
- c Where a research student or a member of staff believes there is the potential for a perceived or actual conflict of interest, this must be disclosed in confidence to the Associate Dean Research or Dean of the Graduate School at the time it is first recognised as such.
- d The Associate Dean Research or Dean of the Graduate School will determine the appropriate measures to take to address the situation.

2 ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

- a MPhil or PhD applicants should normally have been awarded a Master's degree or first or upper second class Honours degree in a relevant subject or should have an award and/or experience deemed by the Associate Dean Research and the Pro Vice Chancellor Research or nominee to provide similar evidence of research potential.
- b The MD is aimed at persons in clinical practice. MD applicants must hold an MBBS or BDS (Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery or Bachelor of Dental Surgery) degree or equivalent, be registered with the General Medical Council or General Dental Council, and have at least three years of clinical or scientific postgraduate experience. Candidates should normally be in appropriate clinical or scientific employment at the University or in an NHS Trust for the duration of the degree. Data collection for the MD is expected to be undertaken as part of a project for which: the University is the sponsor or co-sponsor; or a project sponsored by an NHS organisation where the candidate is named as a student in documentation supporting the project's approval by the Health Research Authority. For NHS sponsored projects, a data sharing agreement will also be required to be in place before the candidate enrolls.
- c Professional doctorate applicants should normally have been awarded either a Master's Degree or a first or upper second class Honours degree in a relevant subject and should have relevant experience in the area of professional practice they wish to research. Any programme specific entry qualifications for professional doctorates will be included in the relevant Programme Description.
- d MSc/MA (by Research) applicants must produce evidence of having fulfilled the entry requirements as prescribed by the programme regulations relating to that particular programme. Applicants should normally have been awarded at least either a first degree from a recognised University or Institute of Higher Education or a qualification deemed by the appropriate College Research Committee to be at least of equivalent standing.
- e Applicants whose first language is not English must demonstrate that they have met the College's English Language requirement before enrolment.
- f Entry requirements for each individual research student will be stated in their offer letter.
- g Applicants will provide details of two referees, one of whom should be for the applicant's most recent period of study/research except for the DBA programme, in which case one referee should normally be the applicant's current employer.
- h The following basic principles have been drawn up to assist Colleges in developing procedures for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), in cases where this is accepted by the College. Recognition of Prior Learning includes certificated learning and experiential learning and may be considered in circumstances where a student wishes to transfer to the University having completed a period of research at another institution:

- i the responsibility rests with the student for making a claim and supporting the claim with appropriate evidence, although advice and assistance on the nature of the evidence required should be provided by the Associate Dean Research. The College should determine appropriate fees for this service;
- ii the experience of the student is significant only in so far as it can be identified as a source of learning;
- iii academic assessment of certificated and experiential prior learning is the responsibility solely of academic staff;
- iv attention should be paid to the matching of a student's stated achievements and competencies against the requirements of the period of the research degree programme for which exemption on the basis of RPL is sought;
- v in making offers for admission with exemption the Associate Dean Research should be sure that the student has already gained the required knowledge/skills for which exemption is awarded and that their ability to follow the rest of the programme will not be jeopardised;
- vi any exemptions on the basis of RPL should be approved by the Associate Dean Research and the period of research for which exemption is granted reported to the College Research Committee;
- vii exemption may be granted for no more than two thirds of the maximum time allowed for submission of the thesis/portfolio, as defined in Regulation 14.1. Students are required to complete at least one full-time or two part-time years within the normal time limits for the programme enrolled as students of the University.

Where a proposal for exemptions involving Recognition of Prior Learning applies to a group of students, the University recognises that whilst the experience of the group might be similar, the students' learning from it, and therefore the exemptions to which they may individually be entitled, might differ.

3 ADMISSION AND ENROLMENT

3.1 Admission

Students may only be offered a place if at least two members of University staff, one of whom must be the relevant College's Associate Dean Research, or their nominee⁸, approve all of the following:

- a the student's entry requirements (see [Regulation 2](#) above)
- b the research start date and mode of attendance (see [Regulation 4](#) below)
- c the proposed research topic (see [Regulation 5](#) below)
- d the location of the research work (see [Regulation 4.3](#) below)
- e the supervisory arrangements (see [Regulation 6](#) below).

Prior to enrolment the student is required to accept the conditions of the offer in writing.

Any subsequent amendments to the conditions, for example a change in the supervisory arrangements, should be approved by the Associate Dean Research, or their nominee, and reported to the College Research Committee.

3.2 Enrolment

⁸ The Associate Dean Research's nominee will normally be the Director of Research Degree Programmes or equivalent. Neither the Associate Dean Research nor the Director of Research Degree Programmes (or equivalent) should take action within these Regulations in respect of students they supervise.

Before commencing research, an applicant for a degree by research and thesis must enrol as a student of the University by fully completing the enrolment process.

4 DATE AND TYPE OF RESEARCH

4.1 Research start date

The student's effective research start date will be one of the following four dates in the appropriate academic year:

1 October, 1 January, 1 April or 1 July

The date (including the year) is determined and approved by the College Associate Dean Research and will be the date closest to the date on which the student enrolls. MSc/MA (by Research) students normally start on 1 October.

4.2 Mode of attendance

Research students must be enrolled on one of the following bases:

- a as a student on an approved MSc/MA (by Research)
- b as a full-time research student
- c as a part-time research student (pursuing research for the equivalent of not more than 24 weeks per year)
- d as a part-time MD student
- e as a full-time MD student if they are a full-time employee of Aston University and are employed for the purpose of delivering a research project (normally as Clinical Research Fellow).

Full-time research is not compatible with full-time employment.

A part-time research student (MPhil/PhD/MD) may be permitted to attend the University for less than 24 weeks a year if approved by the Associate Dean Research on the recommendation of the student's Supervisor.

Most professional doctorate students will be registered as part-time students. Part-time is defined as pursuing research or study (including work-based research) for not less than 24 weeks per year, or equivalent, and not more than 24 weeks per year, or equivalent. Full-time professional doctorate students will only be accepted if they can demonstrate links which will allow appropriate interaction with practice as this will be required for assessment.

The normal time limits for each type of attendance are listed in [Regulation 14.1](#), below.

4.3 Location of research

A research student may pursue full-time or part-time research wholly, or partly, outside the University under the direct supervision of a University Supervisor if approved by the Associate Dean Research on the recommendation of the student's Supervisor.

All research students are expected to attend the University for the examination of the Qualifying Report or equivalent, and for the examination of the final thesis, unless the Associate Dean Research waives this requirement.

4.4 Specific enrolment

All PhD and MPhil students are enrolled in the first instance for an unspecified higher degree by research and thesis. On satisfactory completion of the first year of supervised research, in the case of full-time students, or the second year of supervised research, in the case of part-time students, based on a satisfactory Qualifying Report assessment, each student may be recommended for progression to the MPhil or to the PhD degree programme (see [Regulation 8](#)).

The entry route to a professional doctorate will be specified in the Programme Description and may be via a linked Master's. Professional doctorate students are required to satisfy progression point requirements specified for their programme ([Regulation 8.4](#)).

5 PROPOSED RESEARCH TOPIC and RESEARCH DATA

- a Applicants for a degree by research and thesis should normally provide a project outline as required by their College.
- b The proposed Supervisor must attest that the proposed scheme of work is capable of being pursued to the level and extent appropriate to the relevant research degree (see [Regulation 1.2](#)) within the specified time-limit.
- c Where a proposed research topic is concerned with particularly sensitive material, arrangements may be made to restrict the circulation of the resultant MSc/MA (by Research), MPhil, MD, PhD or professional doctorate thesis or portfolio for up to a maximum of three years through a 'Restriction of Access' (see [Regulation 15.2](#)).
- d The student and the proposed Supervisor are advised to ensure at an early stage of planning the thesis or portfolio that sensitive information will be excluded which does not clearly support the academic basis of the work, to avoid wherever possible the need to request a restriction of access to the finished thesis.
- e Research data (methods and results) are core to research and should be managed in a secure, safe and accurate manner that would facilitate validation of research findings by independent researchers and audit, and in accordance with the University's Research Data Management Policy and any specific requirements of the student's sponsor.

6 SUPERVISION

6.1 Supervision

- a Every research student must be supervised by a Supervisor who is a member of the Academic Staff, as defined in Section 1 of the Statutes or by an appropriately qualified and experienced senior Research Fellow. Research Fellows may only be appointed as Supervisor when their contract extends beyond the expected thesis submission date of the student. A Teaching Fellow with a doctorate may be Supervisor for a student with the qualification aim of DBA, subject to the approval of the Associate Dean Research. The Academic Staff Supervisor of an MD student will additionally have experience of research involving human participants and/or human tissue and appropriate academic scientific expertise to support Protocol development and delivery of the study. For students following the Doctor of Business Administration, a Process Supervisor will be appointed for the taught element of the programme; the Process Supervisor will fulfil the role of Supervisor until the supervisory team is appointed.
- b Where the Supervisor is a Research or Teaching Fellow, a member of the Academic Staff must be appointed as Associate Supervisor.
- c A research student's supervision should normally be supplemented by at least one Associate Supervisor (see [Regulation 6.3](#)).

- d A Supervisor who has not previously supervised a doctoral candidate to successful completion will be supported by an Associate Supervisor who is a member of the Academic Staff who has supervised a doctoral student to successful completion as main Supervisor.
- e At least one member of the supervisory team (Supervisor and/or Associate Supervisor) must be engaged in excellent research.
- f No person may be the Supervisor for more than six research students at any time without the agreement of the Associate Dean Research; this number should be proportionate for part-time staff. A Supervisor who has not previously supervised a doctoral candidate to successful completion will not normally supervise more than three research students.
- g All research students must be given the name and contact details of at least one other member of Academic Staff from whom they may seek advice and support in the absence or unavailability of the main Supervisor, or in circumstances where the student finds the student/Supervisor relationship is not working well.
- h This member of Academic Staff may be from outside the specific area of the student's research topic. The same appointment would normally continue throughout a student's full period of study.

6.2 MSc/MA (by Research)

Students normally must pursue full-time or part-time research wholly within the University under the direct supervision of a Supervisor.

6.3 Associate Supervisors

A research student's supervision should normally be supplemented by at least one Associate Supervisor who is a member of the Academic Staff. A Teaching Fellow with a doctorate may be Associate Supervisor for a student with the qualification aim of DBA, subject to the approval of the Associate Dean Research. Additional Associate Supervisors may be appointed in appropriate circumstances. No person may have an overall supervisory load of more than twelve students (with a maximum of six as Supervisor) without the agreement of the Associate Dean Research; this number should be proportionate for part-time staff. An Associate Supervisor must be appointed by the Associate Dean Research in the following instances:

- a where the Supervisor has not previously supervised a doctoral candidate to successful completion. This Associate Supervisor will be engaged in excellent research;
- b for an MD student, an Associate Clinical Supervisor nominated by the collaborating NHS Trust. Clinical Supervisors are expected to hold a Consultant contract with the Trust in an appropriate clinical area and to have experience of acting as a Principal Investigator for clinical studies.

The appointment of an additional Associate Supervisor is also considered beneficial in the following instances:

- c where the student's research is interdisciplinary, another member of the Academic Staff of the University may be appointed as Associate Supervisor;
- d an appropriately qualified and experienced Research Fellow may be appointed as Associate Supervisor where this would benefit the student's research;
- e where the Supervisor leaves the University and a replacement is appointed from among the Academic Staff of the University, the original Supervisor may be appointed as Associate Supervisor;

- f where there is a collaborative relationship with an external institution, a member of staff of the external institution may be appointed as Associate Supervisor where this would benefit the student's research;
- g to provide a less experienced member of Academic Staff who has not previously supervised a research student to successful completion with practical experience.

6.4 External Contacts

A member of an external organisation in which a student is pursuing research may be appointed in the role of External Contact. The External Contact is not formally involved in the supervision of the student and it is the Supervisor's responsibility to keep the External Contact informed of the student's progress.

6.5 Aston University's Code of Practice for Research Degrees

The Code of Practice for Research Degrees contains guidance on the responsibilities of Supervisors and research students.

7 SKILLS TRAINING

- a All students enrolled on the MD programme or with the aim of qualifying for an MPhil must undertake a minimum of 60 hours' appropriate skills training, including conference sessions, between the research start date and the submission of the thesis/portfolio. All students aiming to qualify for a PhD must undertake a minimum of 90 hours' appropriate skills training, including conference sessions, between the research start date and the submission of the thesis/portfolio.
- b The choice of training to be undertaken is subject to the approval of the Supervisor, in accordance with College guidelines.
- c A list of the training undertaken must be submitted with the thesis/portfolio and sent to the Examiners before the *viva voce* examination.
- d A Supervisor may recommend to the Associate Dean Research or nominee⁹ that a student be exempted from the skills training requirements on the basis of prior learning or experience. The recommendation should normally be made at the time of the student's enrolment on the research programme.
- e All students enrolled with the aim of qualifying for an MSc/MA (by Research) or professional doctorate will undertake appropriate skills training as part of their programme. Details are available as part of the appropriate programme handbook/information.

8 REPORTS

8.1 Reports

Students and Supervisors are expected to be in regular contact, normally at least every two weeks. There should be structured interactions at least every three months between the student and the Supervisor. Before each 3-monthly interaction (which will normally take the form of a meeting), a report of the student's progress covering the previous three months should be submitted to the Supervisor by the student. The student and Supervisor will discuss and agree academic and personal progress, and a record of the outcomes of all such interactions shall be maintained electronically.

⁹ The Associate Dean Research's nominee will normally be the Director of Research Degree Programmes or equivalent. Neither the Associate Dean Research nor the Director of Research Degree Programmes (or equivalent) should take action within these Regulations in respect of students they supervise.

8.2 Annual Reports (MPhil, MD, PhD And Professional Doctorate)

- a At the end of each year of research a report must be submitted to the Associate Dean Research on the performance of each research student, including details of the skills training undertaken by the student during the year and a review of forthcoming training needs, unless the student has been granted an exemption from skills training (see [Regulation 7\(d\)](#)) or completed it as part of a professional doctorate programme (see [Regulation 7\(e\)](#)).
- b Annual reports must be completed before the end of each year following the student's research start date, this applies equally to full-time and part-time students.
- c The annual report submitted to the Associate Dean Research before the end of the first full-time year or second part-time year will contain a recommendation from an independent panel concerning the student's continuation on the MD or progression to either the MPhil, PhD or professional doctorate degree programme, based on the student's Qualifying Report or progression point requirements, and a *viva voce* examination (see [Regulations 8.3](#) and [8.4](#)).
- d In exceptional circumstances, an extension of no more than three months for an annual report may be approved by the Associate Dean Research or nominee*. An extension granted for this purpose will not normally extend the duration of the research programme.
- e Each report must be approved by the Supervisor and will normally be agreed by the Associate Supervisor(s)/Associate Clinical Supervisor for MD. The report must give brief details of meetings between the student and Supervisor(s). A copy of the approved report will be made available to all members of the supervisory team.
- f Details of annual reports received and student progression will be reported to the College Research Committee.
- g Each research student must be sent a copy of their annual report after it has been approved by the Associate Dean Research.

8.3 Qualifying Report (MPhil, MD, PhD)

- a By the end of month 10 of the first year of research, in the case of full-time students, or by the end of month 20 of the second year in the case of part-time students, each research student must write a report on the research work. The report should be a minimum of 6,000 words or as specified by the College Research Committee and should be submitted to the Graduate School Office for forwarding to the Supervisor in the first instance. College Research Committees may specify a maximum length for the Qualifying Report.
- b The Supervisor (and the Associate Clinical Supervisor for MD students) will meet with the student to provide structured written feedback on the Qualifying Report in the form of a brief report. For students in the College of Business and Social Science, the report should also indicate whether the student intends to submit their thesis in the three paper format¹⁰. The submitted Qualifying Report, without further amendment, and the Supervisor's structured feedback report will then be submitted to an independent examining panel. Within two months of the Qualifying Report being submitted, and in sufficient time to allow the progression decision to be communicated by the end of month 12 full-time or month 24 part-time, the student must be examined on its content at a *viva voce* examination conducted by the panel. The panel will comprise at least two members of the Academic Staff, one of whom will be designated as Chair; an Emeritus Professor who is a former member of Academic Staff is eligible

¹⁰ As detailed in Paper AU-GSMC-16-0016-A, approved by the Senate in March 2017 with effect from 2017/18 for students in Aston Business School and Paper AU-RC-18-1733-A approved by University Research Committee in April 2019 with effect from 2019/20 for students in the School of Languages and Social Sciences. The Schools now form the College of Business and Social Science.

to be a member of the panel. The panel will have a minimum of three successful doctoral supervisions between them and at least one panel member will be familiar with the subject area. For an MD student, the panel should have experience of research involving human participants and/or human tissue. In addition:

- i the panel members should not have a supervisory role in respect of the student being examined;
 - ii either the Supervisor, or an Associate Supervisor nominated by the Supervisor to attend in their place, should attend the *viva voce* as an observer. In the case of a less experienced Supervisor who is supported by an Associate Supervisor, the Associate Supervisor may also attend;
 - iii the student will have the opportunity to meet with the panel without any member of the supervisory team being present.
- c It is the responsibility of the research student to advise the examining panel in writing, through the Graduate School Office, before the qualifying *viva voce* examination, of any factors which may affect their performance.
- d On the basis of the student's Qualifying Report and *viva voce* examination, and taking into consideration the Supervisor's structured feedback, the independent examining panel must submit a report to the Associate Dean Research, agreed by all panel members, which includes one of the following recommendations:
- i that the student's progression to the PhD degree programme be approved,
 - ii that the student's progression to the MPhil degree programme be approved,
 - iii that the student's continuation on the MD degree programme be approved;
 - iv that an MD student's progression to an alternative degree programme, e.g. MPhil, be approved;
 - v that the student's enrolment should be terminated, subject to the procedures on representations outlined in paragraph 11e being followed.
- e A research student with a doctoral qualification aim who is unhappy with a recommendation from the independent examining panel for progression to a non-doctoral qualification may make representations in accordance with paragraph 11e.
- f The report on the student should also give a provisional title for the thesis/portfolio.
- g If a research student plans to write the thesis/portfolio in one of the languages taught and examined in their College (other than English), application must be made to the College Research Committee by the Supervisor, on behalf of the student, at the time of the Qualifying Report. The application must explain clearly the reason for the request and must demonstrate that there will be no undue restriction in the choice of Internal or External Examiner if the application is approved. Irrespective of the proposed language of the thesis/portfolio, the Qualifying Report must be written in English and the *viva voce* examination of the Qualifying Report should be conducted in English (as must the *viva voce* examination of the final thesis – see Regulation 18c).

8.4 Progression Point (Professional Doctorates)

- a Students will be formally assessed for progression to the professional doctorate at a suitable point in the programme (normally one year full-time or equivalent).
- b The purpose of the progression point is to assess the student's ability to complete the relevant professional doctorate. It includes an assessment of the candidate's capacity to undertake research.
- c All progression points will include an appropriate *viva voce* examination by an independent, Internal Examiner.
- d Progression points may differ according to programme. A Qualifying Report as defined in [Regulation 8.3](#) might be used as the progression point. Successful completion of a linked Master's programme, if one is included in the curriculum, might be appropriate if the programme provides adequate research skills training and includes a *viva voce* examination of the research report.

- e The progression point will be defined in the documentation for approval of the programme and approved as part of the programme approval process.
- f At progression point an agreement should be reached on the form of assessment (thesis or portfolio) for the professional doctorate.
- g The outcome of the progression point assessment will be one of the following recommendations:
 - i that the student's progression to the relevant professional doctorate degree programme be approved;
 - ii that the student's progression to an alternative degree programme, where applicable, e.g. a linked Master's, be approved;
 - iii that the student's enrolment should be terminated, subject to the procedures on representations outlined in paragraph 11e being followed.

8.5 Progression at End of Second Full-Time/Fourth Part-Time Year (PhD and Professional Doctorates)

Before the end of the second year of research, in the case of full-time students, or before the end of the fourth year in the case of part-time students, each research student must complete a minimum of one of the following:

- an oral presentation of all or part of their research;
- or write up all or part of their research as a paper (without the requirement to submit for publication);
- or write up all or part of their research in the form of an empirical chapter that would constitute part of their thesis.

The choice of task to be undertaken will be made by the Supervisor in consultation with the student. The format of the oral presentation will be specified by the College and will normally be a minimum of 30 and a maximum of 60 minutes (including time for questions); it should provide the student with a 'seminar' experience. The student should also write a brief report on what they have gained from the task. Structured feedback shall be provided to the student after the task, normally by the Supervisor and one of the panel members who assessed the Qualifying Report. A copy of the feedback shall be submitted with the annual report to the Associate Dean Research making a recommendation as to continued progression.

In the case of poor performance in the progression task, the student will be required to undertake the task again, within a specified time period not exceeding six months, in order to demonstrate improvement. Continued poor performance will inform the Supervisor's decision as to the student's overall satisfactory progress (see [Regulation 11b](#)).

9 ABSENCE

9.1 Work away from the University

Research students may, if permission has previously been received from the Associate Dean Research, undertake their research for an extended period at approved centres other than the University, or undertake appropriate field work. Where research is undertaken outside the University in this way, it must remain under the control and supervision of the Supervisor. See also [Regulation 4.3](#), Location of Research.

9.2 Vacation

A full-time research student may be allowed up to six weeks (30 days) of vacation a year, and a part-time student up to 3 weeks (15 days), by prior arrangement with their Supervisor, or a vacation allowance as specified by their sponsor.

9.3 Leave Of Absence

A research student may apply to the Associate Dean Research or nominee for leave of absence of no more than two years on the grounds of pregnancy, illness or other sufficient cause, during which the research work is suspended and no tuition fee is charged, although the student is required to re-enrol. No more than 12 months will normally be granted in the first instance and a request for an unspecified period of leave of absence will not be considered. The period of leave of absence does not count in the University's calculation of time limits for submission of the thesis/portfolio (see [Regulation 14](#) below), and is the same for full-time and part-time students. The decision should be reported to the College Research Committee.

10 TRANSFER BETWEEN MPhil AND PhD DEGREE PROGRAMMES

Provision is made in exceptional cases for transfer between the MPhil or MD and PhD degree programmes at the request of the student or the Supervisor subject to the following conditions:

- a any request for transfer between degree programmes should be submitted to the Associate Dean Research or nominee and must be accompanied by a detailed assessment of the student's work by the Supervisor;
- b the Associate Dean Research may seek independent advice on the standard of the student's work before making a judgement;
- c in agreeing any transfer between degree programmes, the Associate Dean Research shall specify the new submission date for the thesis;
- d the decision shall be reported to the College Research Committee;
- e in the case of an MD student, the relevant NHS Trust(s) agree to the transfer.

11 WITHDRAWAL FROM RESEARCH DEGREE PROGRAMME

- a If a student wishes to withdraw from their research programme, the student must notify their Supervisor and the Graduate School in writing, stating their main reason(s) for leaving.
- b If at any time the Supervisor considers that a research student's progress is unsatisfactory and that the student is unlikely to complete the requirements of the degree, the Supervisor must report this to the student and to the Associate Dean Research, in writing. Where the Associate Dean Research is involved in the supervision of the student, the report should be submitted to the Director of Research Degree Programmes, or equivalent. Where the Associate Dean Research and/or the Director of Research Degree Programmes (or equivalent) are involved in the supervision of the student, an appropriate nominee will undertake the role.
- c Where the unsatisfactory progress has arisen from an extended period of lack of communication over a period of at least three months and where reasonable efforts have been made to contact the student¹¹, the Supervisor may recommend to the Associate Dean Research that the student should be deemed to have voluntarily

¹¹ See University Ordinances, [Part 2.14: Service of Notices and Documents](#)

withdrawn from the research programme. If the Associate Dean Research accepts the Supervisor's recommendation, the Associate Dean Research will formally notify the student of the decision and allow the student a reasonable period of time in which to present any mitigating circumstances, normally fourteen days.

- d If progress continues to be unsatisfactory following the initial notification in writing (other than as a result of an extended period of lack of communication), the Supervisor may recommend to the Associate Dean Research that the student be withdrawn from the research programme. Before deciding that a student should be withdrawn, the Associate Dean Research and the Director of Research Degree Programmes, or equivalent, shall give the student (aided by another member of the University¹², or by a member of staff acceptable to the Senate, if desired) the opportunity to make representations in writing, or in person, or both, of any circumstances that have affected their progress. Where the Associate Dean Research and/or the Director of Research Degree Programmes (or equivalent) are involved in the supervision of the student, an appropriate nominee (e.g. Head of Research Group) will undertake the role. The student must normally be given a minimum of 10 days' notice if a full-time student or 20 days' notice if a part-time student, of the meeting. The student will be informed of the decision, in writing, normally within ten days of the date of the meeting.
- e A student whose enrolment is recommended for termination or for progression to a non-doctoral qualification as a result of the examination of the Qualifying Report or progression point assessment will have the opportunity to make representations to the Associate Dean Research and the Director of Research Degree Programmes, or equivalent, as outlined in d, above.
- f If the student is dissatisfied with the outcome of the consideration of representations made under d or e above, they may appeal under the provisions of the University's Student Complaints or Academic Appeals Procedures, copies of which are available on the University web-site (see [Regulation 24](#)).

12 MSc/MA (by Research)

12.1 Definitions

MSc/MA (by Research) shall be awarded for individual research of, typically, 12 months' duration, to be examined primarily by thesis (normally a small number of taught credits will be included in programmes e.g. research methods training).

MSc/MA (by Research) have a defined structure but do not normally have a programme title as the students' individual research is the main assessment and each individual will normally present a different thesis title.

12.2 Programme Structure and Requirements

- a The overall learning outcomes for any MSc/MA (by Research) programme shall be at master's level as defined by the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (see [Regulation 1.2a](#)).
- b There will be a handbook for students which will include the programme structure and module requirements, and programme regulations.
- c The programme description will specify:
 - entry requirements;
 - attendance requirements (if any);
 - programme structure including any required modules;

¹² as defined in University Ordinances, [Part 1.1: Members of the University](#). A Student Welfare Adviser from the Students' Union has been approved by the Senate to act in this context.

specific assessment requirements for modules including whether modules must be passed or completed.

12.3 Assessment

- a The pass mark for any assessed taught modules shall be 50%.
- b Students may not be reassessed in any module for which they have already obtained credit.
- c The taught component of the programme must be passed before the thesis is submitted.
- d The thesis will be examined in accordance with sections 15-23 of these Regulations.
- e A student who fails to submit a thesis within the permitted time may be required to withdraw from the programme.
- f MSc/MA (by Research) may be awarded 'with distinction' if specified by the programme regulations for the award. To achieve an award with distinction candidates must be recommended for a distinction by the thesis examiners. The Examiners' decision is based on the quality of the thesis (see [Regulation 19.1b](#)) although they will also receive details of the taught modules as confirmation that this element of the programme has been completed.

12.4 Examination Board

Any taught modules will be assessed by Boards of Examiners. Boards of Examiners will be conducted as specified by these regulations and by the General Regulations for the Conduct of Boards of Examiners.

13 PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE

13.1 Characteristics of a Professional Doctorate Award

The professional doctorate is intended for professionals who can utilise and initiate research in relation to the development and management of a range of professional practice and policy development. The award is distinct from the PhD award in the following respects:

- students will be professionals normally conducting research in their own subject;
- within the programme of professional practice, the research leads to the production of a thesis or portfolio which makes a substantial original contribution to knowledge within the student's area of professional practice and of direct relevance to it;
- the research outcomes will contain publishable elements of relevance to the professional areas. The development and dissemination of ideas and good practice are key features of the objectives of the programme;
- the professional doctorate may be made available as part of a suite of linked awards.

13.2 Programme Description

Each professional doctorate award will have a Programme Description, which includes information about the programme structure and any programme specific regulations.

13.3 Title

The degree of professional doctorate is awarded in a professional area such as Education, Engineering, Business Administration, and other appropriate professional subjects. The title

is to have currency in the academic area and designated as Doctor of 'subject' (abbreviated to D and subject acronym, or subject acronym and D) e.g. Doctor of Business Administration, DBA, Doctor of Pharmacy, PharmD, Doctor of Optometry, DOptom. The title will be approved during the programme approval process.

13.4 Structure of a Professional Doctorate

a Mode of study and duration

Typically professional doctorates include a minimum of three calendar years full-time postgraduate study, or equivalent, with study at Level 7 representing no more than one-third of this.

b Credits

The professional doctorate, in common with other Aston University doctorates, is not credit-rated. Where a professional doctorate includes a linked Master's programme or individual modules drawn from taught programmes the award or modules will be credit-rated in line with University regulations for taught programmes.

c Taught modules

All professional doctorate programmes include taught modules. Specific content will vary depending on the professional area of the degree but will be expected to contain:

- formal research training (including research strategies and methodologies),
- appropriate study of the field.

d Progression point

[See Regulation 8.4.](#)

13.5 Assessment

a Taught modules

Students will be required to successfully complete the assessment for a specified number of credit-rated modules.

b Research thesis or portfolio

- **Thesis**

Submission and examination of the thesis, by *viva voce*, will be in accordance with these Regulations.

- **Portfolio**

- i Submission and examination of the portfolio, by *viva voce*, will be in accordance with these Regulations.
- ii The portfolio material will demonstrate a substantial engagement with professional practice over a period of time; the portfolio must contain a body of evidence, which might include published work or innovative practice.
- iii The portfolio will include both an overriding line of argument and a critical commentary which sets the material in a theoretical and professional context.

- iv The portfolio must focus on an area/theme of direct relevance to the student's professional area of work, and aim to disseminate new knowledge and practice throughout the profession to aid its development.
- v The portfolio, taken as a whole, will make an original contribution to knowledge and professional practice.
- vi The nature and indicative components of a portfolio will be specified at the outset as part of the programme approval process, such as to enable the candidate to demonstrate (at the final examination) that the outcomes expected of doctoral candidates have been met. Details of assessment including the minimum number of articles, the minimum length of articles will be specified at the time the programme is approved. A minimum of two published articles and a covering paper outlining the overall line of argument will be required.

13.6 External Examiners

Viva voce assessment of the thesis or portfolio will be undertaken by (at least) two independent fellow professionals appointed as Examiners according to the following criteria and to the criteria for the normal appointment of Examiners (see [Regulation 16.1](#)):

- each Examiner will be experienced in research in the general area of a student's submission and, where practicable, will have experience as a specialist/professional practitioner in the topic(s) to be examined.
- taught modules should be considered by an appropriate Module Board of Examiners. Any linked awards (e.g. Master's awards) shall be considered by an appropriate Programme Board of Examiners. Module and Programme boards will be conducted according to University Regulations for taught programmes.

13.7 Linked Awards

Masters awards may be linked to a professional doctorate including MSc, MA, MRes, MSc or MA (by Research), Postgraduate Diploma and Postgraduate Certificate. The relevant General Regulations for these awards will apply to them.

14 TIME LIMITS FOR SUBMISSION OF THESES

14.1 Normal Time Limits

All time-limits are calculated from the student's research start date, and from 1 October for MSc/MA (by Research). An exception to the normal time limit may be permissible if a sponsor or funding body specifies a different timeframe for the research.

a Full-time students

	MSc/MA (by Research)	MPhil	MD	PhD/Professional doctorate
Earliest date for submission:	not applicable	two years	two years	two years
Maximum time allowed:	one year	two years	two years	three years (see also Regulation 14.2)

b Part-time students

Earliest date for submission:	MSc/MA (by Research) not applicable	MPhil two years	MD four years	PhD/Professional doctorate four years
Maximum time allowed:	two years	four years	four years	six years (see also Regulation 14.2)

14.2 Extension of Time Limit

- a A student who is unable to submit a thesis/portfolio within the normal time limit may apply in advance for permission from the Associate Dean Research or nominee to submit late, if the student can provide good reason why the thesis/portfolio cannot be submitted in time.
- b The application from the student should be made at least one month before the thesis/portfolio is due to be submitted. It must be accompanied by a timetable showing in detail how the thesis/portfolio will be completed within the additional time requested and by a supporting statement from the Supervisor.
- c The Associate Dean Research may grant an MSc/MA (by Research) student up to three months' extension.
- d Normally, the Associate Dean Research may grant a full-time or a part-time doctoral or MPhil student up to one year's extension beyond the maximum time limits for full-time and part-time students given in [Regulation 14.1](#) above. The extension period available to a student on a different timeframe will be adjusted such that the thesis submission deadline is no greater than the maximum normal time limit in [Regulation 14.1](#) plus 12 months.
- e Students who are allowed additional time in which to complete their thesis/portfolio must re-enrol for the period of the extension and will be expected to be finalising their thesis during this period unless specified otherwise.
- f The decision should be reported to the College Research Committee.

14.3 Time Limits if Transfer Between Full-Time and Part-Time Mode of Attendance

Where a student transfers between full-time and part-time mode of attendance, the guideline will be that one year of full-time research is considered to be equivalent to two years part-time research.

15 SUBMISSION OF THESIS/PORTFOLIO BEFORE EXAMINATION

15.1 Required Documentation

15.1.1 MSc/MA (by Research)

Within the prescribed time-limits, a research student enrolled for the degree of MSc/MA (by Research) shall present to the Graduate School Office:

- a three unbound copies of a thesis/portfolio not exceeding 30,000 words in length, excluding appendices. The thesis/portfolio should be produced in accordance with the General Regulations for the Presentation of Theses.

15.1.2 MPhil or Doctorate

Within the prescribed time-limits, a research student enrolled for a doctorate or for the degree of MPhil shall present to the Graduate School Office:

- a three unbound copies of an MPhil or doctoral thesis/portfolio produced in accordance with the General Regulations for the Presentation of Theses. A portfolio submission is not permitted for MD or Doctor of Hearing Therapy;
- b two copies of the thesis/portfolio summary;
- c a signed statement by the student, countersigned by the Supervisor (and Clinical Associate Supervisor for an MD student), clearly acknowledging those parts of the work described in the thesis/portfolio which were done in collaboration (if any) and the extent of the student's contribution to those parts of the work, and confirming that the work has not been submitted for any other academic award unless it is also to be submitted to a second institution as part of a formal cotutelle agreement;
- d if any part of the thesis includes work that is the result of collaborative research (e.g. in a three paper format thesis or as an individual chapter in a manuscript), a statement must be provided by the collaborating researcher(s), confirming the contribution made to the research by the candidate;
- e for a doctorate, signed confirmation from the Supervisor(s) and student that all data is located and secured in accordance with the University's Research Data Management Policy;
- f three copies of a list of skills training undertaken (where applicable).

15.2 Restriction of Access to Thesis/Portfolio

- a Access to a thesis/portfolio may be restricted for an initial period of up to two years from the date of the award of the degree at the request of the Supervisor and student through the College Research Committee to the Graduate School Management Committee.
- b The request must state clearly the reasons for requiring restricted access to the thesis/portfolio.
- c Restriction of access for a further period may only be granted in special circumstances.

15.3 Time between Submission and *Viva Voce* Examination (MPhil and Doctorates)

The *viva voce* examination shall normally be held at least three weeks and no more than three months after the submission of the thesis/portfolio.

16 APPOINTMENT OF THESIS/PORTFOLIO EXAMINERS

All Examiners' appointments must be approved by the Senate or by the Vice-Chancellor or nominee¹³ on behalf of the Senate.

¹³ The Vice-Chancellor's nominee will normally be the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research or the Dean of the Graduate School.

16.1 Normal Appointment of Examiners

Upon submission of the thesis/portfolio the Examiners should be nominated by the Supervisor and approved by the Associate Dean Research and reported to the College Research Committee. Where the Associate Dean Research is the Supervisor, the Executive Dean or Deputy Dean should approve the nominated Examiners. Examiners should be approved in accordance with the following requirements (for professional doctorate candidates see also [Regulation 13.6](#)):

- a one Internal Examiner and one External Examiner must be appointed for each research student and both Examiners must be demonstrably research active. For an MD candidate, at least one of the Examiners should be medically qualified;
- b each Examiner will be experienced in research in the general area of a student's submission;
- c the Internal Examiner must be a member of the Academic Staff of the University;
- d the Internal Examiner may not be the student's Supervisor, an Associate Supervisor, or be otherwise involved in the supervision of the student e.g. a member of a supervisory team;
- e former staff and students may not be appointed as an External Examiner within five years of leaving Aston;
- f Associate Deans Research are required to monitor the nomination of examiners to ensure that the same External Examiner does not regularly examine students from the same Research Group;
- g an External Examiner must have previous experience of successful PhD supervision;
- h the examination team must have experience (i.e. normally three or more previous examinations) of examining doctoral research degree students;
- i neither the Internal nor the External Examiner should have had substantial co-authoring or collaborative involvement in the student's work, and neither of the Examiners' own work should be the focus of the student's thesis/portfolio;
- j an External Examiner should not have been involved in collaborative research activities with the other Examiner or any member of the supervisory team within the five year period prior to the *viva voce* examination;
- k Examiners will be requested to declare any personal conflict of interest which might preclude their appointment.

16.2 Early Appointment of Examiners

The Supervisor may request that the Examiners are appointed before the thesis/portfolio has been submitted. The request must be accompanied by the thesis/portfolio summary and a statement by the student of the date by which the thesis/portfolio will be submitted.

16.3 Referee Examiner

If the Examiners are unable to agree upon a recommendation, an External Referee Examiner nominated by the Supervisor and approved by the Associate Dean Research will be appointed by the Senate, or by the Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate, to make an independent report upon the thesis/portfolio (see [Regulations 19.4](#) and [23.4](#)).

16.4 Examiners for Staff Candidates

Any student who at the time of submitting the thesis/portfolio has been appointed as an employee of the University (i.e. not appointed on casual worker arrangements), or who has ceased to be an employee of the University within the previous 12 months, must be examined by two External Examiners, in accordance with the General Regulations for

Research Degrees by Staff of Aston University and by Aston University Graduates for specified awards.

16.5 Changing an External Examiner

The External Examiner may be changed up to the date of the *viva voce* examination following a submission by the Supervisor for approval by the relevant Associate Dean Research and the Senate, or by the Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate. The appointment of any replacement Examiner must be in accordance with [Regulation 16.1](#).

17 ATTENDANCE AT THE VIVA VOCE EXAMINATION

- a The Supervisor is responsible for nominating the Examiners and for arranging the *viva voce* examination.
- b The following persons must attend the *viva voce* examination:
 - the research student;
 - the Internal Examiner;
 - the External Examiner;
 - the independent non-examining Chair.

The independent non-examining Chair should be appointed from the suitably qualified Academic Staff within the relevant College, except for staff candidates when the Chair should be from a different College. The Chair should not have had a substantial involvement in the candidate's work or have been involved in the appointment of the Examiners, but should have experience of research degree assessment. Independent Chair appointments should be in accordance with Section 1 of the *Conduct of the viva voce examination on a research student's thesis/portfolio*.

The Supervisor may, unless the student objects, attend the *viva voce* examination. The Supervisor may be invited by the Examiners or the Independent Chair to participate in discussions but will be required to leave before any decision is taken, and should not sign any of the Examiners' reports or recommendations.

- c The Supervisor may nominate an Associate Supervisor to attend the *viva voce* in their place.
- d No other person may be present at the *viva voce* examination without obtaining permission in advance from the Senate, or from the Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate.

18 CONDUCT OF THE EXAMINATION

- a Following their formal appointment each Examiner must be sent a copy of the thesis/portfolio by the Graduate School Office. The independent non-examining Chair must not be sent a copy of the thesis.
- b Before the *viva voce* examination each Examiner must read the thesis/portfolio and submit an independent written report.
- c A *viva voce* examination must then be held, normally at least three weeks after and within three months of the student submitting the thesis/portfolio, at which the Examiners test the student's knowledge of the research upon which the thesis/portfolio is based. Irrespective of the language of the thesis/portfolio, the examination must be conducted in English. The Examiners must submit a joint written report on the student's performance at the *viva voce* examination.

- d It is the responsibility of the research student to advise the Examiners, in writing, through the Graduate School Office, before the final *viva voce* examination, of any factors which may affect their performance.
- e If the Examiners are satisfied with the thesis/portfolio but not with the performance of the student at the *viva voce* examination, they may set the student a written examination and make their final recommendation on the basis of the student's performance in the written examination.
- f All Examiners' reports must be submitted to the Senate or the Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate, through the Graduate School.
- g Examiners' reports for MSc/MA (by Research) shall be submitted to the appropriate Examination Board for information.

18.1 Virtual *Viva Voce* Examination

Online platforms supported by Digital Services may be used in *viva voce* examinations only where the External Examiner or candidate is unable, for reasons of prohibitively high cost, difficulties of time, or restricted mobility, to travel to the University at an appropriate time. The option of a virtual viva should not normally be made available solely for the reason that the student has left the University after submitting the thesis/portfolio and does not want to return for the *viva voce* examination.

Where the candidate is the remote party, any materials brought into the virtual meeting should be identified at the start of the examination and no one else should be in the room with the candidate.

Vivas may only be held virtually with the agreement of the candidate, the Examiners and the Associate Dean Research.

Contingency plans should be made in case of technological failure or the need for the candidate to repeat the *viva voce* examination at a later date.

19 EXAMINERS' RECOMMENDATIONS

- a All Examiners' recommendations must be submitted to the Senate or the Vice-Chancellor or nominee¹⁴ on behalf of the Senate, through the Graduate School Office.
- b A student may obtain a copy of the Examiners' joint recommendation relating to their *viva voce* examination on application to the Graduate School Office. Alternatively, the Internal Examiner may provide the research student with a copy of the Examiners' joint recommendation at the conclusion of the *viva voce* examination.

19.1 Satisfactory

- a If the Examiners are satisfied with the thesis/portfolio and with the student's performance at the *viva voce* examination (or written examination, if Regulation 18(e) above is used), they must jointly recommend the award of the degree. The bound thesis should be submitted within one month.
- b The Examiners may recommend the award of MSc/MA (by Research) with distinction if they are satisfied that the thesis is of exceptional quality.
- c The Examiners may not recommend the award of MD/PhD/professional doctorate to a student unless the student submitted for that award.

¹⁴ The Vice-Chancellor's nominee will normally be the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research or the Dean of the Graduate School.

19.2 Satisfactory subject to Revisions

If the Examiners are satisfied with the thesis/portfolio and with the student's performance at the *viva voce* examination but require revisions to be made to the thesis before it is bound, they must make one of the following joint recommendations and inform the student accordingly:

- a Doctoral Submission
 - i That the degree of MD/PhD/professional doctorate be awarded on completion of revisions within three months (see [Regulation 20b](#));
 - ii That the degree of MD/PhD/professional doctorate be awarded on completion of revisions within six months (see [Regulation 20b](#)).
- b MPhil Submission
 - i That the degree of MPhil be awarded on completion of revisions within three months (see [Regulation 20b](#));
 - ii That the degree of MPhil be awarded on completion of revisions within six months (see [Regulation 20b](#)).
- c MSc/MA (by Research) Submission
 - i That the degree of MSc/MA (by Research) be awarded on completion of revisions, with 'distinction';
 - ii That the degree of MSc/MA (by Research) be awarded on completion of revisions, without 'distinction'.

19.3 Unsatisfactory

If the Examiners are not satisfied with the thesis/portfolio (irrespective of the student's performance at the *viva voce* examination), they must make one of the following joint recommendations and inform the student accordingly:

- a Doctoral Submission
 - i that the student be permitted to submit a revised thesis/portfolio for re-examination within one year for the degree of MD/PhD/professional doctorate (see [Regulation 21a](#));
 - ii that the degree of MPhil be awarded (PhD submission only);
 - iii that the degree of MPhil be awarded (PhD submission only) on completion of revisions within three or six months (see [Regulation 20b](#));
 - iv that the student be permitted to submit a revised thesis/portfolio within one year for re-examination for the degree of MPhil (PhD submission only);
 - v that no degree be awarded;
 - vi that the unsuccessful professional doctorate thesis or portfolio be forwarded to the relevant Board of Examiners for consideration as a Master's dissertation (in cases where there is a linked Masters only).
- b MPhil Submission
 - i that the student be permitted to submit a revised thesis for re-examination within one year for the degree of MPhil (see [Regulation 21a](#));
 - ii that no degree be awarded.
- c MSc/MA (by Research) Submission
 - i that the student be permitted to submit a revised thesis for re-examination for the degree of MSc/MA (by Research) within six months of the date of the *viva voce*. In such cases no distinction may be awarded;
 - ii that no degree be awarded.

19.4 No Agreed Recommendation

If the Examiners are unable to agree upon one of the joint recommendations in Regulation 19.1, 19.2 or 19.3 above, they must submit individual reports to the Senate or the Vice-Chancellor or nominee¹⁵ on behalf of the Senate through the Graduate School Office, making clear the reasons for their disagreement (see [Regulation 16.3](#)).

20 COMPLETION OF REVISIONS

- a The Examiners shall provide the student with details of the revisions required to a thesis/portfolio within two weeks of the date of the *viva voce* examination.
- b Revisions to a thesis/portfolio must be completed by the student in accordance with the wishes of the Examiners within an agreed timescale of three or six months from the date of the *viva voce* examination. For revisions to an MSc/MA (by Research) thesis a shorter timescale may be agreed by the Examiners, with the maximum being three months.
- c The Examiners must confirm that the revisions have been completed to their satisfaction before their recommendation is forwarded to the Senate or the Vice-Chancellor or nominee¹⁶ on behalf of the Senate.
- d The External Examiner may authorise the Internal Examiner to approve the student's completion of revisions. If there are two External Examiners (in the case of a staff candidate) one may authorise the other to approve the student's completion of revisions.
- e The Supervisor will provide guidance on the correction of revisions at the request of the student.

21 RESUBMISSION OF A REVISED THESIS/PORTFOLIO FOR RE-EXAMINATION

- a Major or extensive defects in the content or presentation of the research entailing resubmission and re-examination of the MPhil or doctoral thesis/portfolio must be rectified within one year of the date of the *viva voce* examination. This time limit is applicable to both full-time and part-time research students.
- b Major or extensive defects in the content or presentation of the research entailing resubmission and re-examination of the MSc/MA (by Research) thesis should be rectified within six months of the date of the *viva voce* examination.
- c The Examiners must provide the student with details of the required amendments, in writing, when making their recommendation to the Senate or the Vice-Chancellor or nominee* on behalf of the Senate. This should normally be within two weeks of the date of the *viva voce* examination.
- d Students should submit a commentary with their revised thesis/portfolio indicating how the amendments required by the Examiners have been addressed.
- e The student's Supervisor will provide appropriate and reasonable guidance on the revision of the thesis.

22 RE-EXAMINATION OF A REVISED THESIS/PORTFOLIO

The examination procedure must be as specified in Regulations 17 and 18, except where modified by the following provisions:

¹⁵ The Vice-Chancellor's nominee will normally be the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research or the Dean of the Graduate School.

- a the resubmitted thesis/portfolio must be examined by the previously appointed Examiners unless the Senate or the Vice-Chancellor or nominee* on behalf of the Senate is satisfied that there is a sound case for the replacement of any Examiner(s). An Internal Examiner who has since left the University and is no longer a member of the Academic Staff may continue in the role for the student concerned;
- b the appointment of any replacement Examiner(s) must be in accordance with [Regulation 16](#);
- c the Examiners may require the student to attend a *viva voce* examination on the resubmitted thesis/portfolio.

23 EXAMINERS' RECOMMENDATIONS ON A RESUBMITTED THESIS/PORTFOLIO

All Examiners' recommendations must be submitted to the Senate or the Vice-Chancellor or nominee¹⁷ on behalf of the Senate, through the Graduate School Office.

The Examiners should normally determine their recommendation within three months of the student resubmitting their thesis/portfolio.

23.1 Satisfactory

- a If the Examiners are satisfied with the revised thesis/portfolio (and with the student's performance at the *viva voce* examination, if required, or written examination if [Regulation 18e](#) is used), they shall jointly recommend the award of the degree. The bound thesis should be submitted within one month.
- b The Examiners may not recommend the award of PhD to a student submitting a revised thesis/portfolio for the degree of MPhil.
- c The Examiners may not recommend an award 'with distinction' to a student submitting a revised thesis/portfolio for the degree of MSc (by Research).

23.2 Satisfactory subject to Revisions

If the Examiners are satisfied with the thesis/portfolio and, where applicable, with the student's performance at the *viva voce* examination but require revisions to be made to the thesis before it is bound, they must make one of the following joint recommendations and inform the student accordingly:

- a Resubmission for Doctorate
 - i That the degree of MD/PhD/professional doctorate be awarded on completion of revisions within three months (see [Regulation 20b](#));
 - ii That the degree of MD/PhD/professional doctorate be awarded on completion of revisions within six months (see [Regulation 20b](#)).
- b Resubmission for MPhil
 - i That the degree of MPhil be awarded on completion of revisions within three months (see [Regulation 20b](#));
 - ii That the degree of MPhil be awarded on completion of revisions within six months (see [Regulation 20b](#)).
- c Resubmission for MSc/MA (by Research)

¹⁷ The Vice-Chancellor's nominee will normally be the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research or the Dean of the Graduate School.

- i That the degree of MSc/MA (by Research) be awarded on completion of revisions within a maximum timescale of three months. The award may not be made 'with distinction'.

23.3 Unsatisfactory

If the Examiners are not satisfied with the thesis/portfolio (irrespective of the student's performance at the *viva voce* examination, if required), they shall make one of the following recommendations and inform the student accordingly:

- a Resubmission for doctorate
 - i that the degree of MPhil be awarded (PhD only),
 - ii that the degree of MPhil be awarded (PhD only) on completion of revisions within three or six months (see [Regulation 20b](#)),
 - iii that the unsuccessful professional doctorate thesis or portfolio be forwarded to the relevant Board of Examiners for consideration as a Master's dissertation (in cases where there is a linked Masters only),
 - iv that no degree be awarded.
- b Resubmission for MPhil
 - i that no degree be awarded.
- c Resubmission for MSc/MA (by Research)
 - i that no degree be awarded.

23.4 No Agreed Recommendation

If the Examiners are unable to agree upon one of the joint recommendations in [Regulation 23.1](#), [23.2](#) or [23.3](#) above, they must submit individual reports to the Senate, or the Vice-Chancellor or nominee on behalf of the Senate, through the Graduate School Office, making clear the reasons for their disagreement (see [Regulation 16.3](#)).

23.5 Completion of Revisions

- a If the student is required to attend a *viva voce* examination, within two weeks of the *viva voce* examination on the resubmitted thesis/portfolio, the Examiners shall provide the student with details of the revisions required to the thesis/portfolio, and an agreed timescale of three or six months for their completion. For MSc/MA (by Research) a shorter timescale may be agreed by the Examiners, and the maximum should be three months.
- b If the student is not required to attend a *viva voce* examination, within three months of the thesis/portfolio resubmission date, the Examiners shall provide the student with details of the revisions required to the thesis/portfolio and an agreed timescale of three or six months for their completion. For MSc/MA (by Research) a shorter timescale may be agreed by the Examiners, with the maximum being three months.
- c The Examiners must confirm that the revisions have been completed to their satisfaction before their recommendation is forwarded to the Senate, or the Vice-Chancellor or nominee¹⁸ on behalf of the Senate.
- d The External Examiner may authorise the Internal Examiner to approve the student's completion of revisions. If there are two External Examiners (in the case of a staff candidate) one may authorise the other to approve the student's completion of revisions.
- e The student's Supervisor will provide guidance in the correction of revisions.

¹⁸ The Vice-Chancellor's nominee will normally be the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research or the Dean of the Graduate School.

24 APPEALS BY RESEARCH STUDENTS

A student wishing to appeal against a decision of the Examiners may appeal on the grounds set out in the University's Student Complaints or Academic Appeals Procedures, copies of which are available from the University web-site. There is no right of appeal against the academic judgement of Examiners.

25 SUBMISSION OF THESIS/PORTFOLIO FOLLOWING EXAMINATION

25.1 Required Documentation

- a After the *viva voce* examination, the student must submit to the Graduate School Office one copy of the thesis/portfolio, printed in the manner prescribed in [Regulation 4.2](#) of the General Regulations for the Presentation of Theses and one electronic copy of the thesis/portfolio. Both copies of the thesis must incorporate any revisions required by the Examiners. The electronic copy must be presented in the manner prescribed in [Regulation 4.2](#) of the General Regulations for the Presentation of Theses.
- b The copies of the thesis/portfolio must be accompanied by a signed statement from the Internal Examiner or the nominated External Examiner in the case of a staff candidate certifying that they are identical versions of the work assessed by the Examiners, except where revisions were made at their request.
- c The thesis/portfolio must be accompanied by the Research Degree Deposit Agreement Form signed by the student. This Form will be retained by Aston University's Library Services together with the electronic copy of the thesis/portfolio.

25.2 Distribution of Theses

The approved thesis/portfolio will normally be uploaded to the Aston University Research Repository. Doctoral theses will normally be harvested by the British Library EThOS Service.

26 AWARD OF DEGREE

The Senate, or the Vice-Chancellor or nominee¹⁹ on behalf of the Senate, upon receipt of reports and satisfactory recommendations from all the Examiners, together with confirmation that all the requirements listed in [Regulation 1.3](#) have been met by the student, shall approve the award of the degree.

27 WAIVERS OF REGULATIONS

Where, in the opinion of the College Research Committee, exceptional circumstances have adversely affected a research student which could not reasonably have been foreseen, the Graduate School Management Committee may waive any relevant part of these Regulations on such conditions as it may deem fit.

Applications for waivers of Regulations should be submitted to the Graduate School on behalf of the student by the Examiners, if appointed, otherwise by the Supervisor.

¹⁹ The Vice-Chancellor's nominee will normally be the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research or the Dean of the Graduate School.

28 COMPLAINTS BY RESEARCH STUDENTS

- a Research students who are dissatisfied with their conditions of work or the quality of their supervision should wherever possible discuss the difficulties with their Supervisor. In doing so, it may be appropriate to refer to the University Code of Practice for Research Degrees.
- b If a research student prefers not to discuss their concerns with the Supervisor, the student should approach the Associate Dean Research or their nominee or, where the Associate Dean Research is the Supervisor, the Executive Dean.
- c If the Supervisor or Associate Dean Research/Executive Dean does not resolve the student's difficulties, the student may refer the complaint to the Executive Dean under the procedures detailed in the College/Departmental stage of the Student Complaints Procedures, copies of which are available on the University web-site.
- d In circumstances where the Supervisor is the Executive Dean, or the Executive Dean has been approached in place of the Associate Dean Research, the complaint may be referred to the Chief of Operations and Estates or their nominee under the procedures detailed in Stage 2 of the Student Complaints Procedure.

29 MISCONDUCT IN RESEARCH

The University Research Committee has approved Research Integrity Assurance Procedures (AU-RC-18-1563-A and subsequent versions). In this context, misconduct in research is defined, in accordance with the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) definition as including, but not limited to:

- a fabrication;
- b falsification;
- c misrepresentation of data and/or interests and/or involvement;
- d plagiarism; and
- e failures to follow accepted procedures or to exercise due care in carrying out responsibilities for:
 - i avoiding unreasonable risk or harm to: humans; animals used in research; and the environment; and
 - ii the proper handling of privileged or private information on individuals collected during the research.

Examples of research misconduct would also include:

- the intentional, unauthorised use, disclosure or removal of, or damage to, research-related property of another, including apparatus, materials, writings, data, hardware or software or any other substances or devices used in or produced by the conduct of research;
- fraudulent applications for research funding or the misuse of research funding;
- the facilitation of misconduct by collusion in, or concealment of, such actions by others.

It does not include honest error or honest differences in judgements or in the interpretation of data.

The University takes a serious view of any such misconduct and cases of alleged misconduct are dealt with under the University's Regulations on Student Discipline.

30 APPENDIX 1 PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATES INDEX

The full Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis apply to professional doctorate awards. The following may be most relevant:

R1.2d	Nature of the Degree
R2c	Entry Requirements
R4.4	Enrolment
R5	Proposed Research Topic and Research Data
R6	Supervision
R7	Skills Training
R8.1	Three-monthly reports
R8.4	Progression point
R8.2	Annual reports
R11	Withdrawal from research degree programme
R13	Professional Doctorate
R14	Time limits for submission of theses
R15 to R26	Regulations covering Final Examination and Award of Degree

31 APPENDIX 2 DOCTOR OF MEDICINE (MD) INDEX

The full Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis apply to the Doctor of Medicine award. The following may be most relevant:

R1.2c	Nature of the Degree
R2b	Entry Requirements
R4.4	Enrolment
R5	Proposed Research Topic and Research Data
R6	Supervision
R7	Skills Training
R8.1	Three-monthly reports
R8.2	Annual reports
R8.3	Qualifying Report

- R11 Withdrawal from research degree programme
- R14 Time limits for submission of theses
- R15 to R26 Regulations covering Final Examination and Award of Degree

SAS/Graduate School/AJB/July 2020



General Regulations for the Presentation of Theses

AU-GSMC-19-2629-C

Applicable to postgraduate students in all years of
research degree programmes

2020-21



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5 RESUBMITTED THESES

Policy Summary

These General Regulations, approved by the University Research Committee, set out the requirements for the presentation of theses for the postgraduate research degree programmes of MSc or MA (by Research); Master of Philosophy (MPhil); Doctor of Philosophy (PhD); Doctor of Medicine (MD), and professional doctorates, including:

- The requirements for presentation, content, and submission of theses.

Related Regulations, Policies, and Guidance

These general regulations should be read in conjunction with the University's [General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis](#) and the [Code of Practice for Research Degrees](#).

General regulations for other types of programmes operated by the University are available on the [general regulations webpage](#).

Version Control

Reference Number	Version	Responsible Officer	Approved by	Approval Date	Effective Date
AU-GSMC-18-1701	A	Alison Birch	University Research Committee	July 2019	September 2019
AU-GSMC-19-2629	B	Alison Birch	University Research Committee	July 2020	September 2020
AU-GSMC-19-2629	C	Alison Birch	University Research Committee	October 2020	October 2020

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The responsibility for the production of the required number of copies of the research thesis lies solely with the student (see [section 4](#)).
- 1.2 Where additional copies of the thesis are requested by an Executive Dean or other individual, the cost of producing the extra copy or copies must be met by the person(s) making the request.
- 1.3 The cost of amending the thesis following an unsuccessful examination must be met by the student.
- 1.4 Any theses which are not presented in accordance with these Regulations, or whose presentation is not of a sufficiently high standard, may be returned to the student and will not be accepted for examination or re-examination until the faults have been corrected.
- 1.5 The thesis should be proof-read carefully for typographical errors before being submitted.

2 PRESENTATION

- 2.1 All the copies of the thesis must be prepared with the same quality of paper and identical text, diagrams etc.

2.2 Language

- 2.2.1 The thesis must be written in English, except where Regulation 2.2.2 (below) applies.
- 2.2.2 A research student in the School of Social Science and Humanities may submit the thesis in one of the languages taught and examined in that School providing that permission has already been granted at the time of the Qualifying Report (see Regulation 8.3g of the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis).

2.3 Paper and Layout

- 2.3.1 The thesis must be printed on white A4 size paper of good quality, between 70gsm and 100gsm weight.
- 2.3.2 Only one side of the paper should be used and the thesis should be bound so that text appears only on the right hand pages.

2.4 Font Size

- 2.4.1 Textual material should be printed in black ink only using a clear 11 point font (e.g. Arial) (i.e. the height of lower-case text should be around 2mm).

2.5 Spacing

- 2.5.1 Single spacing must be used for the thesis summary, indented quotations, footnotes, formulae and diagrams, and may be used in Appendices and References.

- 2.5.2 Double spacing or 1.5 spacing must be used for all other textual material throughout the thesis.

2.6 Margins

- 2.6.1 The margins of the thesis when bound should measure not less than 35mm at the binding edge (left-hand side) and not less than 15mm for the other margins.

2.7 Page Numbers and Footers

- 2.7.1 Every page of the thesis must be numbered consecutively from beginning to end, beginning with the title page and including pages of diagrams, photographs, and the appendices.
- 2.7.2 Roman numerals (i, ii, iii etc.) are not to be used.
- 2.7.3 The page numbers should be placed centrally at the top or the foot of each page, not in the margin. They do not need to be preceded by the word 'Page', e.g. Page 1 etc.
- 2.7.4 If the thesis occupies more than one volume, the second and subsequent volumes should begin with page 1 rather than continue the numbers from the preceding volume.
- 2.7.5 Every page of the final thesis submitted after the examination must also have a footer, in the format: initials, surname, abbreviation for degree, Thesis, Aston University, year thesis was submitted for examination (or re-examination, if applicable), e.g.

A.N.Other, PhD Thesis, Aston University 2020.

2.8 Figures

Figures, tables, diagrams etc. must be labelled and numbered separately. (See [Regulation 3.6](#) below).

2.9 Length

- 2.9.1 Theses presented for the award of MSc/MA (by Research) should not normally exceed 30,000 words in length, excluding appendices.
- 2.9.2 Theses presented for the award of Doctor of Medicine (MD) should not normally exceed 50,000 words in length, excluding appendices.
- 2.9.3 MPhil or doctoral theses (apart from MD) should not normally exceed 80,000 words in length, excluding appendices. Theses for professional doctorates (e.g. DBA, DOptom) may be shorter than for a traditional PhD.
- 2.9.4 Theses that exceed the word limit will not normally be accepted for examination and any student who anticipates exceeding the word limit should seek the advice of their Supervisor before submitting the thesis.

3 CONTENT

3.1 Order of Items

The thesis must contain the following items in the order given (see below for more information on the items):

Title Page
Thesis Summary
Dedication (optional)
Acknowledgements (if appropriate)
List of Contents
List of Abbreviations (if applicable)
List of Tables, Figures etc.
Main Text of Thesis
List of References*
Appendices*

* If the Appendices are to be bound in a separate volume, then the list of references should be placed at the end of the volume which contains the main text of the thesis.

3.2 Title Page

The title page of every volume of the thesis must contain the following information:

- the full title of the thesis (and sub-title, if any), as agreed with the Supervisor;
- the volume number, if more than one volume will be submitted;
- the full name of the research student (must match the name the student has enrolled under on the University's student records system);
- the degree, written in full, for which the student is enrolled (e.g. Doctor of Philosophy);
- the official title of the University ('Aston University');
- the month and year of first submission for examination or, if resubmitted, the month and year of resubmission for re-examination (i.e. not the month/year of the *viva voce* examination or award);
- the following copyright statement:

©full name of research student, year of submission (or resubmission for a re-examined thesis), e.g. ©Any Person, 2020

[full name of research student] asserts their moral right to be identified as the author of this thesis

"This copy of the thesis has been supplied on condition that anyone who consults it is understood to recognise that its copyright belongs to its author and that no quotation from the thesis and no information derived from it may be published without appropriate permission or acknowledgement."

A sample title page is given at the end of these Regulations.

3.3 Thesis Summary

- 3.3.1 The thesis summary is a concise description of the work undertaken and should contain reference to the problem to be addressed, the approach taken, the key results and conclusion. It must be written in English, and printed in single spacing. All the information

should be contained on one sheet of A4 paper unless the 3,000 word synopsis applies (see [Regulation 3.3.3](#) below).

3.3.2 The summary must be headed 'Aston University', and give:

- the full title of the thesis (and sub-title, if any);
- the full name of the research student;
- the degree for which the student is enrolled;
- the year of submission or, if resubmitted, the year of resubmission.

3.3.3 The summary itself should not exceed 300 words, or 3,000 if the student has obtained permission to submit the thesis in a foreign language.

3.3.4 At the end of the summary there must be up to five key words or phrases (excluding those in the title) which can be used as index terms by the British Library for the national EThOS Service.

3.4 Acknowledgements

Any collaborative work must be clearly acknowledged by the student in a signed statement submitted with the thesis and this acknowledgment should be included with any others on this page.

3.5 List of Contents

3.5.1 All chapters, sections and relevant subdivisions of the thesis must be listed in the correct sequence, with page numbers.

3.5.2 If the thesis comprises more than one volume, the contents of the whole thesis must be listed in the first volume. Each subsequent volume must contain a list of its particular contents, with page numbers.

3.6 List of Tables, Figures, etc.

All tables, figures, photographs, diagrams etc. must be listed in the correct order in which they appear in the text (and Appendices), with page numbers.

3.7 Main Text of Thesis

3.7.1 The thesis must be divided as appropriate into chapters, sections and, if necessary, other sub-divisions. Each chapter must have a title and begin on a new page. Any system of headings or numbering of sections or sub-sections must be used consistently.

3.7.2 Every table, diagram or illustration must be clearly labelled and numbered. Wherever possible they should be placed near the text to which they relate.

3.7.3 Illustrations which cannot be reproduced digitally must be clearly labelled and numbered and either permanently bonded to the appropriate page of the thesis or enlarged to A4 size and bound into the thesis.

Students should remember that if they include colour photographs, or tables or diagrams using colour, the full meaning may be lost when they are reproduced in monochrome.

- 3.7.4 If abbreviations that are not commonly used are included in the thesis, the first use of the abbreviation should appear in brackets after the full wording. If many abbreviations are used, they should be included with their full wording in a list at the beginning of the thesis and be referenced in the List of Contents.

3.8 List of References

- 3.8.1 All published material referred to in the text of the thesis must be clearly identified.
- 3.8.2 The student must use a consistent system of notation and must provide sufficient information for future readers to identify the publication and locate the specific section referred to.
- 3.8.2.1 References to **books** should include the name of the author, the title of the book, the name of the publisher and year and place of publication.
- 3.8.2.2 References to **articles** in periodicals should include the name, with initials, of all the authors, the title of the contribution, the title of the publication, the volume number, number of first and last pages, and year of publication.
- 3.8.2.3 References to **conference proceedings** should include the name of the conference, the name(s) of any sponsoring bodies, the date when and place where the conference was held, the date and place of publication, the publisher, and the editor if applicable.
- 3.8.2.4 References to **reports** should include the series name and number where there is one.
- 3.8.2.5 References to **publications available electronically** should include the type of electronic medium (e.g. World Wide Web page), as many details of publication as are available and, where publication details are not clear, the date accessed and the internet location.
- 3.8.2.6 References to **chapters in edited books** should include the name of the author, year of publication, title of chapter, title of book, editor(s) of book, pages of chapter, name of publisher and year and place of publication.
- 3.8.2.7 References to **working papers** should include author, date (month and year) and publisher or equivalent.

3.9 Appendices

- 3.9.1 Any material which the student considers to be an important and relevant part of the argument in the thesis, but whose bulk would interrupt its flow (e.g. a list of published work), should appear as an Appendix.
- 3.9.2 The Appendices should not contain information which is already included in the main text of the thesis.

3.10 Additional Unbound Material, including Audio Visual Material

- 3.10.1 Whenever practicable, diagrams, maps, illustrations, computer printouts and tables must be bound into the thesis. Transcriptions of audio speech recordings should be included in the text of the thesis.

- 3.10.2 Additional unbound material, including audio-visual material, should be stored in Box prior to the examination. Details of the link to the Box folder should be submitted with the thesis and will be shared with the Examiners.
- 3.10.3 The Box folder must be labelled with the research student's name and initials, degree and date. All items in the Box folder must be numbered and described in the List of Contents. Each item in the Box folder must match its number and description in the List of Contents.
- 3.10.4 After the examination, the same additional unbound material as was stored in Box for the Examiners should be stored on a USB stick and submitted with the print copy of the thesis. The USB stick will be forwarded to Library Services with the thesis.
- 3.10.5 The USB stick must be labelled with the research student's name and initials, abbreviation for degree (e.g. PhD), and date. All items on the USB stick must be numbered and described in the List of Contents. Each item on the USB stick must match its number and description in the List of Contents.

3.11 Research Data

Research data (methods and results) are core to research should be managed in a secure, safe and accurate manner that would facilitate validation of research findings by independent researchers and audit, and in accordance with the University's Research Data Management Policy and any specific requirements of the student's sponsor. Raw data should not be submitted with the thesis but it must be made available, on request, to Supervisors and, subject to ethical and confidentiality considerations, to Examiners.

4 SUBMISSION OF THESIS

4.1 Submission before Examination

- 4.1.1 The three copies of the thesis submitted before the examination should be soft-bound.
- 4.1.2 Soft-bound copies of the thesis should have an acetate or plain card front cover, a plain card rear cover, and a glued or spiral binding spine.
- 4.1.3 The soft-bound copies of the thesis must be accompanied by an electronic copy, saved as a single protected file. An electronic copy of the thesis will be sent to the External Examiner by the Graduate School Office; a hard copy of the thesis may be requested by any Examiner.
- 4.1.4 The electronic copy of the thesis may be uploaded to plagiarism detection software and if the electronic format is not compatible, the student may be required to provide an alternative electronic copy of the thesis.

4.2 Submission after Examination

- 4.2.1 After the *viva voce* examination, the student must submit to the Graduate School Office one copy of the thesis, printed in the manner prescribed in Regulations 4.2.3 to 4.2.4 below, and an electronic copy, both of which must incorporate any revisions required by the Examiners.
- 4.2.2 The copies of the thesis must be accompanied by a signed statement from the Internal Examiner (or nominated External Examiner in the case of a staff candidate) certifying that

they are identical versions of the work assessed by the Examiners, except where revisions were made at their request.

- 4.2.3 Each print copy thesis will be A4 in size and must be loose bound in a manner specified by the Graduate School.
- 4.2.4 No single volume should exceed 400 pages.
- 4.2.5 One copy of any unbound material, including audio visual material, should be submitted with the thesis, presented as in Regulation 3.10.
- 4.2.6 The preferred format for the electronic copy is a single unprotected Portable Document Format Archivable (PDF/A) file; a single unprotected PDF file, or separate PDF files (e.g. for each chapter) will be acceptable, provided that the sequence is clear and the student accepts that the file will be joined together in a single PDF. The electronic copy will be accompanied by the Research Degree Deposit Agreement Form, signed by the student. This Form will be retained by Aston University's Library Services.
- 4.2.7 The electronic copy must be clearly named with the student's full name, Student Number, and year of submission or resubmission for examination.
- 4.2.8 Where a student who submitted for PhD is recommended for the award of MPhil, the references to Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) should be amended to Master of Philosophy or MPhil on the title page, thesis summaries and the spine of the bound copies of the thesis.

5 RESUBMITTED THESES

- 5.1 The above requirements apply equally to first submission and resubmission of the thesis, with one exception: where a student is required to resubmit a former PhD thesis for the degree of MPhil, the references to Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) should be amended to Master of Philosophy or MPhil on the title page. The date the thesis was resubmitted for re-examination, not the date of the first submission, should be used, including in the copyright statement.

THE FULL TITLE OF THE THESIS AS AGREED WITH THE SUPERVISOR

The sub-title of the thesis [if applicable]
should follow the full title of the thesis

VOL I [if applicable]

THE FULL NAME OF THE RESEARCH STUDENT

Doctor of Philosophy / Doctor of Business Administration / Doctor of Education /
Doctor of Hearing Therapy / Doctor of Medicine / Doctor of Optometry /
Doctor of Pharmacy / Master of Philosophy / Master of Science (by
Research)

ASTON UNIVERSITY

Month and year of submission (or resubmission, if applicable)

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Appendix F: Aston Research Data Management Policy

Aston Research Data Management Policy

May 2020

This document sets out the policy for research data
management for Aston University staff & students

May 2020

Reference Number	Version Letter	Executive Sponsor	Officer Responsible for Policy/ Procedures	Consultation Process	Date of Approval and Committee and/or Executive Officer	Effective Date
Version 1.4		Paul Maropoulos	Heather Whitehouse	Research Data Management Steering Group (sub group of Research Committee)	Research Committee	December 2016
				Research Committee		
1.5		Simon Green	James Wolffsohn	Library Services Research Integrity Office Graduate School Management Committee	Research Committee (tbc)	June 2020

Aston University Research Data Management Policy

1. INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF THE POLICY

The maintenance of accurate and retrievable data arising from research projects is an essential component of good practice in the conduct of research and a key component of research integrity. While computers and memory sticks can be secured with encryption, regular backup and access to the latest version cannot be ensured. When data was recorded and altered needs to be transparent along with the ability to retrieve any data mistakenly deleted.

Opening up research data for scrutiny, to validate and replicate research or for re-use in further, possibly unrelated, research is a key component of Open Research.

The principles of Open Research Data are set out in the [Concordat on Open Research Data](#) of which UKRI (HEFCE and RCUK at the time), UUK and Wellcome Trust are all signatories. The principle that research data, arising from publicly funded research should be treated as a public good, is reflected in the policies and conditions of major public research funders.

Open Research Data can only be delivered when the planning and management of research data takes account of that eventual outcome in earlier stages of the research lifecycle.

1.1. Purpose of the Policy

This policy covers Aston's approach to Research Data management (including Open Data), as a critical output of the research process.

1.2. What is covered by the Policy

This policy covers the processes, arrangements and limitations for storing research data and (where appropriate) for making research data open either for re-use or in support of research publications to enable the validation of that research.

For the purposes of this policy, Research Data are defined as factual records, which may take the form of numbers, symbols, text, images or sounds, used as primary sources for research, and that are commonly accepted in the research community as necessary to analyse and validate research findings. Data may comprise primary raw data or secondary analysed data.

Making data open is essential where there is a funder requirement for Open Research Data and its application may be extended to research data from non-funded research where there are no legal, commercial sensitivity or ethical barriers.

1.3. Who is Covered by the Policy

This policy applies to all researchers and research students at Aston University with regards to the management of data arising from their research, and to the roles of the various individuals or services that will support the management of research data during its lifecycle.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

2.1. General data management

- 2.1.1. The principal investigator / supervisor should set up a folder on Box *(or an alternative Aston University Research Integrity Office approved data store) for each project where all data is to be stored ideally in real time. This cloud storage can allow access to data lost in the past 194 days. Secondary back-ups can be made on other devices. There is space on Box for all research data including images/videos. Exceptions can be considered as part of the ethics and governance review procedures.
- 2.1.2. Consent forms should be scanned, stored in a separately pass-worded area of Box* and the originals destroyed.
- 2.1.3. Data storage should follow the duration approved as part of the ethics and governance review.

- 2.1.4. Each research student supervisory meeting record should include a commitment as to these regulations being followed.

2.2. What Research Data should or should not be made Open

- 2.2.1. Research data arising from research where the funder has a requirement for Open Research Data should be made Open in line with that funder's requirements and with this policy.
- 2.2.2. Where research data underpins a research publication, then sufficient data to enable validation or replication of that research should be made Open subject to legal, commercial sensitivity and ethical constraints.
- 2.2.3. Research datasets with the potential for reuse in future research should be made Open subject to any legal, commercial sensitivity or ethical constraints.
- 2.2.4. Research data should NOT be made Open if:
- i. it relates to research which is likely to be commercialised (i.e. a patent),
 - ii. it contains confidential or personal data,
 - iii. doing so would be an infringement of a legal agreement (e.g. with a funder or collaborator),
 - iv. or where there is a need to manage a security risk.

2.3. Where and how should Research Data be made Open

- 2.3.1. Data in datasets should be fully anonymised before being made Open. Note that fully anonymised data must no longer have any means of linking it back to the individual and is no longer classified as personal data;
- 2.3.2. Datasets should be identifiable (i.e. the sets, not any personal data), retrievable, and available when needed;
- 2.3.3. Datasets should be assigned a persistent Digital Object Identifier (DOI) which has been generated for that dataset;
- 2.3.4. Publications for which there is an underpinning dataset should have a Data Access Statement added prior to article submission. This should include the persistent DOI generated for the relevant dataset. Note that this is an essential requirement of some funders;
- 2.3.5. Data should be stored in a secure data repository suited to the data concerned; [Aston Data Explorer](#) is open to all datasets;
- 2.3.6. Any data which is retained outside Aston, for example in an international data service or domain repository, should be registered with the University by including the associated metadata and a link in Aston Data Explorer;
- 2.3.7. Sufficient metadata to describe the data and facilitate discovery should be provided in Aston Data Explorer (based on E-prints <http://researchdata.aston.ac.uk/>);
- 2.3.8. Links between publications records and related datasets records should be established.

2.4. Making Research Data Open with restrictions or an embargo

Where the type of data makes it necessary to limit or control access to a dataset a repository (such as Aston Data Explorer) should be selected which offers one of two options:

- Embargoed, for when research data can be Open after an initial embargo period has expired.
- Restricted, for data types which have ethical, commercial, copyright or IP issues where a decision has been made that the metadata for the dataset can be made public but access to the dataset only provided to users who make a request on the repository and provide sufficient justification.

2.5. Retention of Open Research Data

Datasets that have been made Open should be retained for a period which follows best practice in the discipline or in line with funder requirements. If none exists, data will be retained by default for a period of 10 years after which a review will take place to determine whether the data should be retained for a further period.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1. The University is responsible for:

- 3.1.1. Providing access to services and facilities for the storage, backup, deposit and retention of research data and records that allow researchers to meet their requirements under this policy and those of the funders;
- 3.1.2. Facilitating access to training, support and advice on research data;
- 3.1.3. Providing the necessary resources to those central services responsible for the provision of these services, facilities and training.

3.2. Research Group Heads or Associate Deans for Research are responsible for:

- 3.2.1. Ensuring that researchers in their area are aware of this policy and their responsibilities in relation to it;
- 3.2.2. Defining protocols or producing guidelines to assist researchers in their area to meet the requirements of this policy.

3.3. Principal Investigators are responsible for:

- 3.3.1. Ensuring, at the outset of a research project, a Data Management Plan is created which documents clear procedures for the collection, storage, use, re-use, access and retention or destruction of the research data;
- 3.3.2. Ensuring that throughout the project, storing, sharing and manipulation of data is in accordance with legal and ethical requirements and recommended practices to ensure data is kept secure, backed-up and organised effectively;
- 3.3.3. Ensuring that accurate and up to date data of all projects are stored in line with university's policies so it is accessible after the completion of the research or in the event of their departure or retirement from the University;
- 3.3.4. Ensuring that any requirements in relation to research data and records management placed on their research by funding bodies or regulatory agencies or under the terms of a research contract with the University are also met;

4. SOURCES OF GUIDANCE

Advice on how to implement the requirements set out in this policy are available in the [Research Data Management Libguide](#) or by emailing researchdata@aston.ac.uk

5. DEFINITIONS

Research Data: are defined as factual records, which may take the form of numbers, symbols, text, images or sounds, used as primary sources for research, and that are commonly accepted in the research community as necessary to validate research findings. Data may comprise primary raw data or secondary analysed data.

Open Research: **Open Research is the practice of researching in such a way that others can collaborate and contribute throughout the research process. Open Research is not limited to STEM subjects; it encompasses all fields and stages of research with the goal of making the results Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable (FAIR).**

Open Research Data: Making your research data freely available to anyone, anywhere in the world and downloadable.

Metadata: Information held as a description of stored data.

DOI: Digital Object Identifier, a persistent identifier used to identify objects uniquely and standardised by the International Standards Organisation

6. RELATED REGULATIONS, STATUTES AND POLICIES

[Concordat on Open Research Data](#)

[Intellectual Property \(IP\)](#)

[Research Integrity](#)

[Ethics](#)

[Research Integrity Assurance Procedures](#)

[Open Access Policy and Code of practice](#)

[Data Protection Policies and Procedures](#)

[Records Management Policies and Procedures](#)

[Aston Data Explorer Governance Policy](#)