



2022/23

Code of Practice for Research Degrees

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# Introduction

## Purpose

The ‘Code of Practice for Research Degrees’ should be read alongside the University’s ‘Regulations for Research Degrees’ and ‘Guide to the Examination Process for Research Degrees’. YSJU ensures its arrangements for the provision of research degrees, as a minimum, meet the requirements of the [UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: Research Degrees](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/research-degrees).

This code outlines the principles, processes, general rules and conventions relating to research degrees.

This code is updated on an annual basis.

The Research Degrees Committee are responsible for approval of changes to this code.

## Scope

This code applies to all postgraduate researchers on research degrees.

Students are bound by the University policies and regulations that are in force for the current academic year. This edition of the ‘Code of Practice for Research Degrees’ is the definitive guide to all research degrees and replaces all earlier versions.

## Audience

This code is made available to all university staff and postgraduate researchers (PGRs).

## Update summary

V2 September 2022

A record of updates is stored in Section 19.

# Management of Research Degrees

## Senior management oversight

The Pro Vice Chancellor (Research & Knowledge Transfer) has overall responsibility for research, including PGRs, including:

* + - * ensuring that an adequate management structure and procedures are in place for handling PGR matters;
      * ensuring that minimum standards of facilities are available to PGRs (operation, monitoring and reporting to be carried out by student representatives, Registry and Research Office staff);
      * ensuring that there are appropriate procedures in place in the University to consider appeals by PGRs as set out in the procedures governing PGRs published on the website.

The Pro Vice Chancellor (Research & Knowledge Transfer) delegates day-to-day responsibility for PGRs to the School Postgraduate Research Leads (SPGRLs) via Heads of Schools.

## Committee oversight

The **Quality and Standards Committee (QSC)** is a sub-committee of the Academic Board and is responsible for the quality of programmes and standard of awards for all provision, including research degrees.

The lead committee for research degrees is the **Research Degrees Committee (RDC)**. The RDC is a sub-committee of QSC with responsibility for oversight of research degree provision, including:

* + - developing and reviewing policies and procedures relating to research degree provision;
    - identifying issues of concern and good practice in relation to PGRs;
    - monitoring recruitment and the overall student experience of PGRs;
    - monitoring the progress of PGRs;

RDC is chaired by a research-active senior member of staff, with significant experience of supervising PGRs. RDC’s constitution includes the Head of Postgraduate Research, School Postgraduate Research Leads, a Head of School and Associate Head of School representative, PGR representation. To ensure confidentiality, matters relating to individual PGRs are dealt with as reserved business without the student representatives present. RDC refers relevant matters relating to the wider research environment to the Research Committee.

The **Research Committee** is responsible for the development, promotion and performance of research and innovation (including REF preparation) through the setting and maintenance of standards for research programmes including research ethics and integrity and enabling the contribution of research to teaching and assessment.

The **Research Degrees Examination Panel** **(RDEP)** is responsible for the implementation of University policy and procedures for the examination of research degrees. Its Chair is appointed by the Quality and Standards Committee from RDC members. Its responsibilities include the appointment of examiners for individual research degree candidates and approval of joint examiners’ reports.

## Operational oversight

YSJU **Registry** has responsibility for:

* + - oversight of procedures relating to quality and standards of research degrees;
    - maintaining comprehensive central records for PGRs, including in relation to their progress through the programme;
    - examination processes for research degree candidates;
    - ensuring that PGRs are represented on the RDC through liaison with YSJU Students’ Union.

YSJU **Research Office** has responsibility for:

* + - provision of induction and generic research skills training for PGRs;
    - provision of training for research degree supervisors;
    - provision of research administrative support;
    - ensuring that PGRs are represented on Research Committee through liaison with YSJU Students’ Union.

## Academic oversight

Each of the Schools is managed by a Head of School and has a School Research & Knowledge Transfer Lead who has specific responsibilities in relation to research, and a School Postgraduate Research Lead who has specific responsibilities for PGRs.

Heads of School have responsibility for the following:

* + - recommending supervisors to RDC through Registry;
    - recommending alternative and acceptable supervision arrangements when a supervisor leaves YSJU;
    - ensuring that no supervisor is overloaded with supervisory responsibilities and reviewing the position regularly;
    - the delegation, where relevant, of responsibilities for postgraduate matters to appropriate individuals;

Under this *Code of Practice,* Heads of School may delegate specific responsibilities to a SPGRL and/or to Postgraduate Research Tutors.

Specific SPGRL responsibilities include:

* + - overseeing the recruitment and admission of PGRs and approval of supervisory teams, ensuring that appropriate expertise for supervision and adequate resources for the proper conduct of the research are available, and that any potential ethical issues arising from the application are considered;
    - providing on-going support and mentoring to supervisors and potential supervisors;
    - overseeing the processes for reviewing and assessing PGRs; and
    - approving requests for individual PGR matters in relation to admissions, suspensions, extensions, changes to supervisory teams, changes of programme and postponement of the transfer process.

SPGRLs may delegate and/or share their responsibilities subject to approval by the Head of School.

Each School should have two or more academic staff acting as Postgraduate Research Tutors. Postgraduate Research Tutors are responsible for pastoral care and conducting annual pastoral meetings.

## PGR record

A comprehensive record of the PGR’s time at YSJU will be maintained by Registry on the central PGR record, including reports of supervision meetings, review reports, agreed training plan, records of suspensions and extensions, transfer assessment, examination entry and other information (for example, medical certificates). These records will be maintained in accordance with Data Protection legislation.

# Admission

## Admission requirements

The ‘Research Degree Student Admission Policy and Interview Guidance Notes’ set out current information on admission and interview requirements. The minimum requirements for entry to a research degree are normally:

* + - an upper second class honours degree (2:1) or a postgraduate Master’s degree in a relevant discipline;
    - for applicants whose first language is not English, evidence of English language competence as set out in the ‘Research Degree Student Admission Policy and Interview Guidance Notes’.

Or, in exceptional circumstances:

* + - such other qualifications and/or experience as may be deemed by the RDC to be acceptable as equivalent.

## Application process

Applications for research degrees must be made through the Online Admission System and **must** include:

* + - a fully completed application form;
    - draft research proposal;
    - evidence of English language qualification to YSJU minimum standard (for those whose first language is not English);
    - two academic references.

Where applicants do not meet the minimum requirements (stated above) a rejection decision may be made by the SPGRL acting alone, but all other admissions decisions must involve at least two members of academic staff. SPGRLs are responsible for the availability of an appropriate research environment for all PGR applicants in advance of an offer being made, including expertise for supervision (to include team member(s) meeting the research excellence criterion), adequate resources for the proper conduct of the research and for ensuring that any potential ethical issues arising from the application are considered.

Accreditation for Prior Learning (APL) will be considered in respect of the taught components of a practice-led research degree in the School of the Arts, School of Humanities or School of Science, Technology & Health. APL is not permitted in any circumstances against the taught components of Professional Doctorates. APL is also not permitted, in any circumstances, against the research thesis or thesis preparation components.

SPGRLs are responsible for identifying an appropriate supervisory team (see [Section 4.1](#_Supervisory_Teams)). Recommendations for admission are made by SPGRLs to RDC. Once approved, the Admissions Office is responsible for making a formal offer on the University’s behalf, setting out any relevant conditions.

The University requires applicants whose first language is not English to meet or exceed the minimum English language entry requirements detailed in the ‘Research Degree Student Admission Policy and Interview Guidance Notes’ or equivalent deemed suitable by the University.

Tests must have been completed within the two years prior to issue of a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) by the University. Interviewers should take steps to ensure that the applicant has a sufficient use of the English language to embark on the research, bearing in mind the demands of the discipline. Where PGRs have satisfied these English language requirements, but further English language training needs are identified after admission, further training is available. This should be included in the training and development needs analysis and training plan.

This Code of Practice is available on the YSJU website and is drawn to the attention of applicants at the time of application.

Additional guidance in respect of **PhD (by Published Work)** programmes is contained in [Section 18](#_PhD_by_Published).

## Bench Fees

Bench fees will be applied to Biosciences research degree courses. The bench fee is additional to the tuition fee and is charged per year at the following levels:

* + - Band 0 is no fee
    - Band 1 is £1 000
    - Band 2 is £2 500
    - Band 3 is £5 000
    - Band 4 is for variable amounts above £5 000

Applicants will be advised of the relevant bench fee in their offer letter.

# Supervision

## Supervisory Teams

PGRs will normally have a supervisory team which is comprised of one main supervisor with one or more co-supervisors. The main supervisor and at least one co-supervisor should normally be members of YSJU staff with approved supervisor status to ensure that all PGRs have at least two ‘in house’ supervisory points of contact, but other co-supervisors may be external, for example from other HEIs. It is not necessarily the case that the main supervisor will be the most senior or experienced member of the team.

PGRs on a Masters by Research programme may have a main supervisor only, if deemed appropriate by the School.

Normally the main supervisor must be a member of YSJU staff, but in cases where a main supervisor moves to another employer, they may, if appropriate, continue to supervise the PGR to completion. If this is the case, a second YSJU co-supervisor will be appointed.

Supervisors are appointed by RDC. It is the responsibility of the SPGRL to recommend suitable supervisors for appointment. Potential supervisors are required to complete a course on research degree supervision before being appointed to a supervisory team.

Supervisors will be appointed provisionally at the time that a formal offer of admission is made, and will be confirmed or, where appropriate, alternative arrangements will be made when the PGR registers. It is the responsibility of the Head of School, in conjunction with line managers within the School, to ensure that no supervisor is overloaded with supervisory responsibilities and the position of individual members of staff should be reviewed regularly. RDC maintains oversight of the register of approved supervisors and current allocations.

YSJU supervisors should not normally be supervising more than six as the main supervisor, or ten in total as co-supervisor. The numbers of PGRs allocated to each member of staff will be reported annually to RDC. The document ‘Eligibility criteria for research degree supervision and supervisory teams’ sets out further details on the eligibility criteria, training, monitoring and support for research degree supervision.

## Supervisor responsibilities

Ensuring that the PGR is introduced to the facilities of the School and the University that are relevant to their research and that they are fully aware of relevant Health and Safety regulations;

Assisting the PGR in defining the topic which is to be investigated in the course of the research. It is vital that this should give sufficient scope for investigation appropriate to the degree, but not be so large a topic that it cannot be mastered within the standard period of study. Where the research is sponsored by an outside body, the terms of such sponsorship must be carefully considered;

Assisting the PGR to clarify the research question which the study seeks to address, and to establish details of the research programme, such as resources required and, where appropriate, the experimental design;

Ensuring, in consultation with the SPGRL that the PGR has access to the necessary facilities for the research;

Approving a timetable of work and endeavouring to see that it is followed. Supervisors should emphasise to PGRs that the University attaches great importance to the timely completion of research;

Conducting, with the PGR, a training and development needs analysis (or approved equivalent, i.e. Vitae Researcher Development Framework planner or professional body portfolio)within one month of commencement of study and agreeing a training plan;

Reviewing the training plan regularly (at least annually) and assisting the PGRs in identifying other training needs and in reflecting upon their personal development, for instance by reference to the [*Statement on Learning Outcomes*](https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/media/content-assets/registry/research-degrees/reference-documents/Learning-Outcomes-for-the-award-of-research-degrees.docx);

Where the programme contains subject-specific modules, directing the PGR through the relevant programme of courses;

Seeking to ensure that the PGR receives available research training which may be necessary or appropriate in the individual case;

Making the PGR aware of any relevant [research ethics and integrity requirements](https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/research/research-ethics--integrity/) and informing them of ethical procedures and ethical review;

Making the PGR aware of the ‘[Research Data Management Policy’](https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/policies-and-documents/library/research-data-management-policy/)*,* including storage, backup and encryption;

Agreeing a supervision programme with the PGR and arranging regular meetings with the PGR (see [4.5](#_Supervisory_Meetings) below);

Ensuring that, where appropriate, the PGR is aware of the University’s arrangements for transfer to full degree registration and that appropriate guidance on preparing for transfer is provided;

Preparing regular reports on the PGR’s progress;

Ensuring, in partnership with the PGR, that there are written records of all formal supervisory meetings;

Commenting within a reasonable time on written work submitted by the PGR;

Otherwise advising generally on the research and preparation of the thesis;

Alerting the SPGRL and Registry in a timely manner, to any situation where it may become necessary to request a suspension or extension of study for a PGR;

Reporting to the Academic Registrar any suspected instance of [research misconduct](https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/media/content-assets/registry/research-degrees/complaints-appeals-and-disciplinary/Research-Misconduct-Policy-and-Procedures.docx);

Reporting to the SPGRL in the first instance any suspected case of [academic misconduct](https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/staff/learning-and-teaching/academic-misconduct/);

Ensuring that the PGR receives written feedback on the assessment of progress, and to draw to the attention of the PGR problems when they arise, where necessary, in writing;

Taking action to bring to the attention of the SPGRL and Registry any concerns about a PGR’s unsatisfactory progress;

Reading and commenting on the whole of the draft thesis prior to submission provided that it is made available by the PGR in reasonable time. It is essential that a timetable for submission of the draft thesis is agreed with the PGR in advance of the maximum time limit which allows the supervisor a reasonable length of time to carry out this duty and for the PGR to act on any comments received. Any planned periods of absence by the supervisor from the University should be taken into account.

Keeping the Head of School and SPGRL informed of any absences likely to impact upon time available for supervisory duties;

Sending forward recommendations, through the SPGRL, for the appointment of examiners to Registry for consideration by RDEP;

Ensuring that the PGR is aware of the appropriate YSJU arrangements for the [examination of research degree theses](https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/media/content-assets/registry/research-degrees/thesis-submission-and-examination/Guide-to-the-examination-process-for-research-degrees.docx) (and the time limits for submission) and ensuring that the PGR receives appropriate guidance about the oral examination including, where requested, a ‘mock viva’;

Reporting to Registry and (in the case of overseas PGRs) the Visa & Compliance team when there has been no contact with an individual PGR or when there has been a pattern of absences which is affecting the PGR’s progress or causing concern for the PGR’s well-being (see Section 6 Attendance Monitoring);

Engaging with internal and external opportunities for CPD in research supervision to maintain contemporary expertise.

## PGR responsibilities

To be familiar with, and comply, with all University policies, particularly in respect of the requirements for:

* [Research Degrees Regulations;](https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/policies-and-documents/regulations/)
* [Research Ethics and Integrity](https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/policies-and-documents/research/ethics-and-integrity/);
* [Research Data Management Policy;](https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/policies-and-documents/library/research-data-management-policy/)
* [Health and Safety](https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/policies-and-documents/health-and-safety/);
* [Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity](https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/policies-and-documents/equality-and-diversity/)

To reach agreement with the supervisory team on an appropriate training plan;

To carry out research effectively, to attend the University, to present work regularly and to an adequate standard in an appropriate form and against an agreed timescale, taking into account any holiday entitlement;

To identify matters they wish to discuss at supervision meetings and to seek out the supervisor as problems arise;

To agree to a supervision programme, to maintain regular contact with their supervisory team and to attend formal supervision meetings throughout the programme of study (including the overtime period) (see [section 4.5](#_Supervisory_Meetings));

Ensuring, in partnership with the supervisory team, that there are written records of all formal supervisory meetings;

To draft reports of supervision meetings and to submit, when requested, regular written summaries of overall progress to their supervisors or, where appropriate, to the Head of School, SPGRL, Postgraduate Research Tutor or Registry;

To comply with normal working arrangements in their School;

To discuss with their supervisory team whether any teaching or other work undertaken will adversely affect the time available for the conduct of the research and make appropriate arrangements;

To take measures to attend appropriate training courses, personal development programmes and research seminars in consultation with their supervisory team;

To ensure that they complete registration and make payment of fees at the appropriate times, including the payment of Bench Fees if appropriate to the course;

To make use of relevant facilities provided by YSJU and abide by the regulations specified for the use of these facilities;

To keep their personal University record up to date by engaging fully with administrative procedures;

To promptly draw to the attention of the supervisory team or SPGRL when there is a situation where it may be necessary to request a suspension or extension of study. If appropriate, documentary evidence should be provided (e.g. medical certificate);

To consult with a Postgraduate Research Tutor or appropriate senior member of staff within the School, in confidence, if they have serious concerns about the PGR/supervisor relationship;

To discuss with their supervisory team, in good time where possible, should they wish to be away from their research activity for a substantial period (e.g. in the case of a full-time PGR for more than five working days);

To make available to their supervisory team for comment, within an agreed timescale, the whole of the draft thesis prior to submission;

To ensure that at all times they observe high standards of academic conduct and integrity and are aware of the consequences of failure to observe relevant requirements in the context of the University’s ‘[Policy on Academic Misconduct](https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/staff/learning-and-teaching/academic-misconduct/)’ and ‘[Policy on Research Misconduct](https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/media/content-assets/registry/research-degrees/complaints-appeals-and-disciplinary/Research-Misconduct-Policy-and-Procedures.docx)'.

## Change of Supervisor

Where a supervisor is likely to be absent from the University for an extended period, the Head of School should ensure that appropriate arrangements are made for advising the relevant PGRs and that their progress is not detrimentally affected by the absence of the supervisor. Where the absence exceeds two months, arrangements will normally be put in place to identify an alternative supervisor to ensure the continuity of supervision is maintained.

In circumstances where a supervisor will be leaving the University, they must ensure that, as soon as possible, the Head of School and SPGRL are notified. In this situation, the Head of School, through the SPGRL, is responsible for ensuring that alternative and acceptable supervision arrangements are put in place and that the PGR is informed at the earliest opportunity.

A replacement for a supervisor leaving the University should be added to the supervisory team as soon as possible. The departing and replacement supervisors should ensure that a hand-over meeting takes place so that the transition for the PGR is a smooth process. The handover should preferably be done as a face-to-face meeting but a written report could be done as an alternative if necessary.

## Supervisory Meetings

PGRs are required to maintain regular contact with their supervisor(s) and attend for formal supervision. In addition, PGRs will need to attend appropriate training courses, personal development programmes and research seminars in consultation with their supervisor(s). Persistent neglect of work and failure to make progress and/or achieve a satisfactory academic standard may result in the instigation of the ‘Unsatisfactory Academic Progress Procedure (see Section 10)’.

Whilst academic progress may have been judged by the supervisory team as satisfactory this does not guarantee transfer or that the degree will be awarded. To qualify for the award of a research degree, a PGR must meet the required learning outcomes for the degree and satisfy the examiners. An award is not guaranteed simply because the supervisory team has indicated general approval for the thesis before it is submitted.

The requirement is that a full-time PGR will have a minimum of 10 supervision meetings a year. The relevant number for part-time PGRs is 6 a year. SPGRLs may specify a higher minimum number of formal supervision meetings than the University minimum given above. Whilst the pattern and timing of formal supervision meetings will vary according to the needs of individual PGRs and between subject areas it is expected that meetings will be held regularly throughout the standard period of study with gaps between meetings of no more than 8 weeks for full-time PGRs (or 12 weeks for part-time PGRs).

Supervisory meetings can take place either face-to-face or by an agreed form of electronic meeting (e.g. MS Teams, Skype, Zoom, FaceTime). Where circumstances mean neither is possible for a supervisory meeting a telephone call or email communication can be a short-term substitute. Records of the contact, e.g. copies of emails, should be kept in these circumstances.

It is the responsibility of the supervisor to ensure that written reports of formal supervision meetings are maintained. Draft notes of the supervision meetings should be prepared by the PGR for agreement with the supervisor. Copies of the supervision reports should be held on the PGR record by Registry.

Attendance at formal supervision meetings and the recording of this attendance are requirements of the University. Failure of the PGR to attend their formal supervision meetings or to help document supervisory meetings properly may result in termination of registration.

Additional guidance in respect of **PhD by Distance Learning** programmes is contained in [Section 17](#_PhD_by_Distance).

Additional guidance in respect of **PhD (by Published Work)** programmes is contained in [Section 18](#_PhD_by_Published).

## Pastoral Meetings

Whilst all PGRs have a supervisory team to support them and SPGRLs are also available to provide additional support, a one to one pastoral meeting with a Postgraduate Research Tutor is offered annually to all PGRs. This provides an opportunity for a Postgraduate Research Tutor to review progress, discuss this with the PGR and to enable the PGR to comment upon the nature of the supervision received and to draw attention to any matters of concern. Where a School Postgraduate Research Tutor is the supervisor an alternate must be appointed to enable PGRs to seek an independent source of advice when a PGR/supervisor relationship is not working well.

## Commitment to Research Activity

It is important that a research project is completed within the standard period of study. A research project provides the preparation and training for a professional career and requires the same commitment to meeting objectives and timescales for the completion of work. Full-time PGRs are therefore expected to work on their research project (and related professional activity e.g. conference attendance, research skills training) for periods of time that are comparable to a full-time academic post (the equivalent of an average of 40 hours a week). Part time PGRs are expected to work on their research project for the equivalent of an average of 20 hours per week.

A PGR’s work load will vary during the course of the year and should be agreed with the supervisor(s). When approaching a specific deadline such as the submission of a transfer report or thesis, additional hours of work may be necessary but PGRs are encouraged to maintain a good work/life balance and may take up to 25 days holiday a year (in addition to days when the University is officially closed) in consultation with their supervisory team.

PGRs may find it useful to consider dates of religious observance in planning for meeting key deadlines in their research degree candidature. The Open University has a calendar of religious festivals which is available from the OU [website](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.open.ac.uk%2Fequality-diversity%2Fcontent%2Freligion-or-belief&data=04%7C01%7Cj.graham%40yorksj.ac.uk%7C709bf13f14f6479703ae08d957439ab7%7C5c8ae38ef85b4309b7ec862815a37aee%7C0%7C0%7C637636770130618902%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=hW9hXZ311EH8os%2FYcbMlS5Rs%2B1%2FlS6Yx%2BEXbVJhaaRs%3D&reserved=0).

# Periods of Study

## Standard, minimum and maximum periods of registration

Normal periods of study for research degrees are set out in the University [*Research Degree Regulations*](https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/policies-and-documents/regulations/).

These are reproduced, for information only, below:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Award | Mode of Study | Minimum period of registration | Standard Period of study | Normal maximum period of registration to submission |
| Doctor of Philosophy[[1]](#footnote-1) | Full-time | 2 calendar years | 3 calendar years | 4 calendar years |
| Part-time | 3 calendar years | 6 calendar years | 7 calendar years |
| PhD (by Published Work)[[2]](#footnote-2) | Part-time | 3 calendar months | 1 calendar year | 2 calendar years |
| Professional Doctorate [[3]](#footnote-3) | Part-time | 4 calendar years | 6 calendar years | 6 calendar years |
| Master of Philosophy | Full-time | 1 calendar year | 2 calendar years | 3 calendar years |
| Part-time | 2 calendar years | 4 calendar years | 5 calendar years |
| Master of Arts/ Master of Science by research | Full-time | 1 calendar year | 1 calendar year | 1 calendar year |
| Part-time | 2 calendar years | 2 calendar years | 2 calendar years |

In order to keep the research on course for submission before the maximum time limit, it is expected that supervisory contact will continue during any overtime period after the end of the standard period of study. Full-time PGRs will continue to be entitled to a minimum of 10 formal supervision meetings a year (and part-time PGRs a minimum of 6 a year).

## Change of programme

A change of programme request must be submitted on a PGR Change of Programme form. It is advised that PGRs contact Registry in advance of making a request to ascertain the viability of the change being requested.

PGRs who are in their standard period of study may submit a request to change their mode of study. The request will need to be approved by the SPGRL. Registry will calculate the remaining period of study applicable to the PGR and send out confirmation to the PGR and their supervisory team.

A change of programme from PhD to MPhil may be possible depending on the length of time studied to date. It is not possible for those on a Masters by Research programme to change to another degree.

# Attendance Monitoring for PGRs

## Guidelines for Monitoring the Attendance of PGRs

The following types of sessions may be used for recording the attendance of PGRs during their period of study:

* Formal supervision meetings
* Meetings with members of University staff
* Pastoral meeting with Postgraduate Research Tutor
* Formal review and transfer assessment meetings
* Attendance at internal/external conferences, meetings or research seminars
* Attendance at internal/external training sessions
* Attendance at modules
* Other central/school events

The requirement is that a full-time PGR will have a minimum of 10 supervision meetings a year; the relevant number for part-time PGRs is 6 supervision meetings a year. The pattern and timing of supervision meetings may vary according to the stage of the candidature and between subject areas, however meetings will be held regularly throughout the standard period of study with gaps between meetings of no more than 8 weeks for full-time PGRs (or 12 weeks for part-time). Notes of all formal supervision meetings must be kept on the supervision log.

Supervisors should report to the SPGRL when there has been no contact or missed supervision meetings with individual PGRs for a month (unless an absence has been authorised or a suspension is in place), or where there is a pattern of absences which is affecting the PGR’s work or causing concerns for the PGR’s wellbeing. **For international PGRs, if one supervision meeting is missed with no contact or engagement from the PGR, the PGR will be reported to the Home Office.**

The supervisor should contact the PGR promptly to explore any problems, in consultation with the SPGRL. This provides an opportunity for issues to be resolved with the PGR and to identify any more serious problems early. It may, for example, be appropriate to consider instigating the Unsatisfactory Academic Progress Procedure. Registry should also be informed where there is continued absence or lack of contact with a PGR.

Where issues cannot be quickly resolved, the supervisor should work with the SPGRL to explore whether support can be offered that enables the PGR to return to studies, or whether a suspension of studies should be considered until issues are resolved.

Where issues remain unresolved and prolonged absence continues, it may be necessary for the PGR to suspend or withdraw or, if they are not in contact, to be presumed withdrawn.

**It is essential that problems are identified and responded to as quickly as possible. This is particularly important in the case of international PGRs as the additional requirements of the Home Office must be taken into account.** Delays can turn relatively simple problems into much more complex ones. Delays can also prevent PGRs from getting crucial, timely immigration, financial or other professional advice. For further information on attendance monitoring for international PGRs, please contact the University’s [Visa & Compliance Team](mailto:visa@yorksj.ac.uk).

# Suspension, Extensions and Authorised Absences

## Outline

Some PGRs will encounter events or circumstances which disrupt their academic progress (e.g. ill-health, personal difficulties). In many cases PGRs will recover any time that is lost during their candidature but where difficulties are sufficiently disruptive this may not be possible and such circumstances may be accommodated by considering a period of [suspension](#_Suspension_of_Study) or [extension](#_Extension_of_Study) of study (see the definitions given below) to mitigate against the difficulties encountered and to ensure that the PGR is not disadvantaged. Suspensions and extensions delay the deadline for submission of the thesis for examination. In the case of suspensions the date for transfer from provisional to full PhD status may also be delayed.

In all cases the PGR must, at the point of examination, meet the criteria for award of the research degree; there can be no ‘mitigating circumstances’ with regard to meeting the criteria for the award. All PGRs must complete an examination and the thesis submitted for examination has to reach the required standard for the award of the degree and the specified learning outcomes must be met. Any mitigating circumstances which may have affected the candidate during their period of study cannot be taken into account as part of the assessment of the thesis and will not lead the examiners to award a research degree where the work is not felt to be of the appropriate standard.

It is the responsibility of the PGR to check the implications of a suspension or extension of study with their scholarship awarding body or provider. External funders may place limits on the length of suspension/extension allowed and PGRs are responsible for checking the implications of a request for suspension/extension on their funding.

## Requesting a suspension or extension

PGRs should promptly draw to the attention of their supervisor(s), Postgraduate Research Tutor or SPGRL any situation in which it may be necessary to request a suspension or extension of study. Failure to take prompt action may lead to the PGR losing the time available to complete their studies.

PGRs wishing to seek a suspension or extension of study should complete and submit the required form.

Supervisors are responsible for alerting the SPGRL to:

* any situation where it may become necessary to request a suspension or extension of study, in a timely manner;
* reporting if there has been no contact or missed supervision meetings with an individual PGR for a month in the case of full-time PGRs or two months for part-time PGRs (unless absence has been authorised for illness or other suspension etc) or where there is a pattern of absences which are affecting the PGR’s progress or causing concern for the PGR’s well-being;
* any delays relating to formal progress and review meetings.

The SPGRL is responsible for authorising requests for suspensions and extensions of study for individual PGRs and sending to Registry for approval.

Research Degrees Committee is responsible for considering, and reaching decisions on, requests for suspensions and extensions of study and has delegated its authority to the SPGRL for considering these requests. When considering requests for suspensions and extensions of study YSJU will take due regard of external factors including Home Office Visa Regulations and UK Research & Innovation Funding requirements.

RDEP is responsible for considering, and reaching decisions on, requests for suspensions and extensions of study during the examination and re-submission periods.

Registry will advise the PGR of the outcome of the suspension/extension request by email to the PGR’s YSJU email address on the PGR record. A copy of the email will also be sent to the supervisors and the Research Office. The PGR record will be updated to show the suspension/extension and revised maximum time limit.

## Suspension of Study

A ‘suspension of study’ is a period of interrupted study when the PGR temporarily leaves the programme of study and loses their registration status. During this period the PGR does not receive supervision and does not have borrowing rights for the library. Access to IT facilities will remain available to the PGR – this includes email and VLE access. During this period a PGR is not liable for academic fees and is not expected to progress their research. The period of suspended study does not count towards the time available for completion of the degree.

Examples include, but are not limited to: serious illness (for those in possession of supporting medical evidence (e.g. doctor’s note), significant personal difficulties, bereavement, financial reasons, accident, maternity or paternity.

A suspension of study on the grounds of maternity, paternity, adoption or parental leave will not count towards the maximum period of study as detailed in the University regulations. See also Section 8 of the Code of Practice for Assessment and Academic-related Matters.

The PGR is expected to return to study immediately after the period of suspension has ended unless an additional period of suspension has been requested. PGRs returning to study are required to re-register. In all cases the SPGRL should be satisfied that the PGR is able to resume study and the difficulties have been overcome. Where appropriate, documentary evidence should be sought. For example, when a PGR resumes study following a period of suspension due to ill-health it will be on the basis that they are medically fit to do so and satisfactory medical evidence should be provided by the PGR.

Suspensions will not normally be backdated for more than one month. A request for a retrospective suspension of study will only be considered in the most exceptional circumstances. It is, therefore, essential that prompt action is taken by the PGR, supervisory team, Postgraduate Research Tutor and SPGRL to formalise requests for suspensions of study.

## Extension of Study

An ‘extension of study’ is a lengthening of the candidature to take account of a period of disruption to studies. The PGR will not leave the programme of study and will normally continue to progress their research but with some disruption of study over a limited period slowing progress rather than interrupting progress completely.

Examples include, but are not limited to: equipment breakdown, serious illness or recovery from accident/surgery, significant personal difficulties or family illness which have substantially affected progress. In very exceptional cases where the research of a PhD PGR reveals a substantial quantity of unexpected new material during the final year of study consideration might be given to an extension of up to one year.

Extension requests will normally be made prior to the completion of the standard period of study and at a point when it is clear how much of the time lost has been compensated for during the standard period of study. In the case of a request made on academic grounds this should be made towards the end of the standard period of study.

Cases will be expected to show that some unforeseen and unforeseeable circumstances have arisen which have significantly and adversely affected the progress of the research of the PGR and against which precautions could not reasonably have been taken.

Research projects require careful time management. Delays to the delivery of equipment and/or equipment breakdown are not uncommon. During periods of such inconvenience consideration should be given to the other aspects of the research the PGR can progress to avoid impact on the length of the overall candidature. In such cases waiting until the end of the standard period of study to assess the impact of delays is appropriate.

Where an unexpected event/disruption to study occurs during the overtime period the extension request should be made at the point the event occurs. The PGR and the supervisor(s) should agree a timetable for completing the writing up of the thesis which includes milestones. In some cases the RDC Sub Group may require sight of the timetable for completion before considering an extension request.

During periods of extension PGRs will have access to Library and IT facilities and will be entitled to supervision. All research work, including experiments, should have been completed within the standard period of study and any period of extension granted should be for writing up the thesis.

## Extensions and long-term medical conditions

The University acknowledges the practical difficulties related to individual circumstances resulting from long-term medical conditions. Communication of difficulties encountered by PGRs at an early stage is encouraged as this will facilitate early intervention to address any difficulties and for appropriate support to be identified. Consideration will, therefore, be given, to requests for extensions based on long-term medical conditions at the time the difficulty occurs or at the end of the calendar year of study (as part of the annual progress review process) rather than waiting until the end of the standard period of study as described above.

## Supporting disabled PGRs

Support for disabled PGRs will be made as appropriate to facilitate equality of opportunity. This may be done as arrangements for reasonable adjustments or by applying an extension of study as appropriate to the individual circumstances and the Disability Advice Team may be consulted for advice.

PGRs should be encouraged to seek advice/and or support from the [Disability Advice](https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/health-and-wellbeing/disability-support/) and [Wellbeing](https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/health-and-wellbeing/wellbeing-support/) Teams where difficulties occur. Where a needs assessment/practitioner’s view is that a reasonable adjustment is to provide an extension to the candidature consideration can then be given to the length of time required. Schools are encouraged, where appropriate, to liaise with the PGR and the staff in the relevant support team before submitting requests for such extensions.

## Suspensions and extensions during the thesis examination process

RDEP is responsible for considering, and reaching decisions on requests for:

* + - suspensions/extensions during the examination period; and
    - extensions to the deadline for amendments for candidates recommended for award.

Requests for PGRs during the thesis examination process are considered by RDEP in accordance with the arrangements outlined above for suspensions/extensions during the period of study prior to submission of the thesis. Schools should therefore ensure they have consulted the relevant section of this document before submitting a request. Requests should be made in the same way using the pro forma provided.

Cases where sympathetic consideration is likely to be given to an application for a suspension or extension are outlined in the relevant sections above. In addition to these, RDEP may give exceptional consideration to requests made where the PGR is now in full-time employment and is making a request on the basis of ‘pressures of work’. Full details must be included in the request.

For PGRs recommended for the award of the degree and completing amendments, given the period for amendments is 6 months requests for long extensions are unlikely to be given sympathetic consideration, unless the circumstances are exceptional.

## Length of suspensions/extensions of study

Suspensions should be requested in whole months only, with the minimum being one month. A period of up to 12 months suspension can be considered by the University at any one time, with a review at the end of that period if necessary.

Extensions can be given in days/weeks/months as appropriate to the circumstances. In the case of Masters by Research the maximum period of extension permitted on academic grounds is three months.

A PGR will not be granted periods of extension and suspension totalling more than 24 months. In the event of a PGR wishing to exceed this period, unless exceptional permission is granted, they will be required to withdraw from the research degree.

## Documentary Evidence

PGRs are required to submit documentary evidence from an independent and relevantly qualified third-party professional in support of requests for suspensions and extensions of study where appropriate. The supporting evidence must provide confirmation of the circumstances, the impact on the PGR and indicate the period of disruption/duration of impact. **This evidence should be forwarded to Registry and will be retained in line with data protection requirements.** Sight of such documentary evidence may be requested by the RDC Sub Group, but will not normally be sent out with suspension or extension requests. Where illness is proposed as the grounds for suspension or extension of study the PGR must provide satisfactory medical evidence (eg full medical certificate) as evidence in support of the request. The medical certificate might take the form of a fit to study note, letter or report from a medical professional (eg PGR’s GP or doctor).

## Guidance on providing satisfactory medical evidence

The evidence should demonstrate how the PGR’s medical situation is affecting their ability to study and contain objective medical evidence (not just ‘the patient told me that …’). In the case of a suspension it should cover the period for which the suspension is required.

PGRs should be advised to obtain information which includes:

* + - The dates and duration of any period when the PGR's health has completely prevented or will completely prevent them from studying/when they are not fit to study;
    - The dates and duration of any period when the PGR ‘may be fit for study’ if their doctor thinks that returning to study will help them recover. The doctor should be asked to advise on how the PGR’s health may affect their ability to study (for example unable to use a keyboard for long periods or decreased mobility so difficult to get onto campus);
    - For international PGRs studying in the UK on a Student Visa only, confirmation of whether the PGR is fit to fly.

The presentation of a prescription or the box cover of medication or the submission of a series of medical appointments is not acceptable evidence as this gives no professional opinion of the PGR's capacity to study.

A suspension or extension request on the basis of illness should reflect the severity and duration of the illness as described in the medical evidence, and recuperation or recovery time may be included within a requested suspension or extension.

In all cases it is the responsibility of the PGR to ensure that the evidence provided addresses these requirements.

PGRs who have taken suspensions of study on medical grounds may be required to provide evidence that they are medically fit to resume study at the end of the period of suspension (eg doctor’s note).

## Grounds for Suspension/Extension of Study

Approval of requests for suspensions/extensions of study is not guaranteed. Poor academic progress in itself is not reasonable grounds for a suspension/extension.

Cases where the RDC Sub Group is likely to be sympathetic to an application for suspension/ extension include (provided that the length of time requested is reasonable in that it bears close relation to the events experienced by the PGR):

* + - Accidents;
    - Bereavement;
    - Serious ill health (of the PGR);
    - Family illness;
    - Unexpected events e.g. theft, equipment not being delivered or equipment breakdown;
    - Maternity or paternity (for maternity leave the PGR must make a request before the maternity leave is due to begin);
    - Significant personal difficulties;
    - Systemic catastrophe in home country (e.g. war, natural disaster, civil unrest).

Cases where the SPGRL is unlikely to be sympathetic to a request for suspension/extension include:

* + - When the PGR has completed the standard period of study on a full-time basis and is in the overtime period and now in employment and is making a request on the basis of ‘pressures of work’
    - Where the request is based on the grounds that the PGR has got married/honeymoon period (this should normally be taken from the PGR’s annual leave entitlement)
    - Where there is no clear relationship between the amount of extra time being requested and the problem being encountered by the PGR.
    - Where permission has been granted for the PGR to register concurrently for another programme of study and a request is based citing academic or other commitments linked to the other registration.

In all cases the length of time requested needs to be specified and reasonable, in the sense that it bears close relation to the events experienced by the PGR.

## International PGRs on a Student Visa (formerly Tier 4)

There are additional requirements placed upon the University by the Home Office in relation to international PGRs who are in the UK on a Student Visa (formerly Tier 4). Any adjustments made to a research degree candidature must continue to satisfy the conditions set by the Home Office if the University is to continue to sponsor the PGR. These include:

* + - the PGR remains registered as a full-time PGR and makes progress with their research, attending all supervision meetings, seminars, research skills training and other research events;
    - if the PGR stops studying the University is required to make a report to the Home Office and the PGR’s leave may be curtailed. In this event the PGR is required to leave the UK. PGRs whose study is suspended should be referred to the Visa & Compliance Team ([visa@yorksj.ac.uk](mailto:visa@yorksj.ac.uk)) for advice;
    - any short periods of authorised absence must not have an effect on the PGR’s ability to meet deadlines for their research studies, including the transfer deadline and the maximum time limit for submission of the thesis.

All PGRs on a Student Visa who wish to leave the UK for a period of time (e.g. research visit, conference, medical issues, holiday or family visit) during their research degree must complete an absence request form. This is to confirm that the School agrees with their plans to leave the country and that the absence is registered with the Visa & Compliance Team.

It is, therefore, **essential** that international PGRs holding a Student Visa are aware of the following in the event of a suspension to their studies:

* + - Their visa will be curtailed by the Home Office; and
    - They are required to leave the UK during this period: and
    - They will need to request a new CAS and apply for entry clearance before returning to the UK; and
    - They should seek immigration advice from the University’s Visa & Compliance Officer ([visa@yorksj.ac.uk](mailto:visa@yorksj.ac.uk))

In exceptional cases the University may report absence to the Home Office but not recommend that a PGR leave the UK. Examples of this are where there is civil unrest in the PGR’s home country or extreme medical incapacity. The PGR may then be advised to make an immigration application outside the rules. This would usually involve a referral for specialist immigration advice outside the University.

International PGRs should not wait for receipt of medical evidence before contacting Registry and the Visa & Compliance Officer.

Where appropriate, the Visa & Compliance Officer will report the absence to the Home Office and inform both the PGR and School concerned that a report to the Home Office has been made. Failure to comply with this requirement could jeopardise the University’s Highly Trusted Sponsor status as well as causing the PGR to breach the immigration regulations.

During an extension of study attendance should be monitored in accordance with established University policy. If the PGR fails to attend, action should be taken in line Section 6 (Attendance Monitoring for PGRs)*.*

## Authorised Absence

In some cases a period of suspension of study may not be necessary and a period of authorised absence is more appropriate subject to the following requirements:

* + - if the period of absence will be for a short period (up to four weeks) in addition to any period of annual leave (five weeks) in any one calendar year; and
    - the time away from studies will have no impact on the PGR’s ability to meet deadlines (e.g. transfer, maximum time limit for submission of the thesis).

In such cases the supervisor and the PGR must agree that the short period of absence can be absorbed into the candidature with no allowance made for the PGR to meet academic deadlines for submission of work. A record of the agreement should be kept in writing (e.g. email) and a copy forwarded to Registry for the PGR file.

The University is not required to report short periods of authorised absence (for international PGRs holding a Student Visa to the Home Office provided they do not impact on the overall time limit for completion of the programme of study.

# Progress Review

## Timeline for Review

The first formal review meeting will be held as follows:

* + - * Full-time PGRs – by the end of the sixth month;
      * Part-time PGRs – by the end of the ninth month.

An annual progress review will take place at 12 month intervals after the first review meeting for MPhil or part-time Masters by Research PGRs and at twelve month intervals after transfer assessment for PhD PGRs.

## Review Process

Review reports will be completed online through eVision but additional documentation will need to be emailed to those involved.

The first formal review meeting should include the PGR, main supervisor (and co-supervisors if available) and an independent assessor (from a cognate discipline, but from outside the supervisory team) who will chair the review meeting. The meeting may be conducted as a face-to-face or online meeting.

Annual reviews for those who registered on a PhD programme and are in the post-transfer stage may be carried out as a paper-based review rather than as a formal meeting. The supervisor can recommend that the review be held as a paper-based exercise, however, the chair may request the review take place as a face-to-face or online meeting if considered necessary.

PGRs will need to prepare the following documentation, with relevant input from the main supervisor, for each review:

* + - A piece of sole-authored written work that presents an opportunity to assess academic progress without detracting from completion of the research and thesis writing. The word limit and content of the written work is to be agreed between the supervisor and the PGR in accordance with any School requirements and should be appropriate to the point the PGR has reached in their candidature;
    - A reflection on progress to date, which might include completed chapters / laboratory work and conference attendance;
    - A plan for completion of the research and the thesis within the remaining period of study (eg Gantt chart);
    - Progress Report(submitted online via eVision)*;*
    - Completed/updated ‘Training and Development Needs Analysis’ (or approved equivalent, i.e. Vitae Researcher Development Framework planner or professional body portfolio) and ‘Training Plan’
    - Supervision reports covering the previous 12 month period.

The independent assessor (chair of the panel) completes the ‘Review Report’(online via eVision) **within 10 working days of the meeting** and submits it to the SPGRL for approval. The SPGRL should approve the report via eVision within **5 working days** and the report will then be available for the PGR to view.

Registry will update the student record and progress stage for the PGR.

Where there are complex circumstances in an individual PGR’s review the SPGRL may refer the report to RDC for consideration and approval (under reserved business).

RDC will receive a list of the reports approved by the SPGRL.

# Transfer assessment (Doctoral PGRs only)

## Provisional Registration

All doctoral PGRs are initially registered as provisional doctoral PGRs and are subject to a formal transfer assessment within a specified timescale. If successful in this assessment PGRs are transferred to full doctoral registration.

The transfer assessment is intended to identify whether the individual PGR and the research project have the potential for research at doctoral level and also whether completion of a thesis within the standard period of study for the programme concerned is a reasonable expectation. It will also consider whether the PGR has made satisfactory progress with the agreed training plan.

## Timeline for Transfer Assessment

Full-time PhD PGRs are required to complete the whole transfer process, including the transfer review and any potential revisions to the transfer progress report, within 12 months of their start date (24 months for part time PGRs). If a transfer decision is deferred, a final decision must be made with 18 months of the start date (30 months for part time PGRs).

A PGR can make a request to postpone the date for transfer which would be considered by the RDC sub group. If the request is approved, the date for maximum limit for completion of transfer would still apply (as set out below), i.e. the period of postponement, transfer assessment meeting and any period for deferral of the transfer decision must take place within that overall timescale.

The time limits for completion of transfer assessment are given below. Any exception to these must be approved by the RDC Sub Group.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mode of Study | Normal time limit for submission of transfer material | Normal time limit for completion of transfer | Maximum limit for completion of transfer for deferred or extended candidates |
| Full time | 10 months | 12 months | 18 months |
| Part time | 22 months | 24 months | 30 months |

## Transfer submission

Transfer reports will be completed online through eVision but additional documentation will need to be emailed to those involved.

PGRs will need to prepare the following documentation, with relevant input from the main supervisor, for the transfer assessment:

* + - A sample of sole-authored written work relating to the topic of at least 10,000 words. This may be a draft chapter from the thesis, a critical review of the literature/evidence base, a critical discussion of methodology or another piece of work agreed by the supervisor and SPGRL (work that has been co-authored is not permissible for transfer assessment purposes);
    - If the PGR is pursuing a practice-led research project then the submission must include evidence of creative practice which, depending upon the nature of the practice, might be a creative writing component, the staging of an exhibition of visual work, a live performance, or the documentation of creative practice/performance in a retainable form. The practice element of a transfer submission may relate to collaborative practice. This should be accompanied by a sole-authored written piece of at least 5,000 words that critically reviews, analyses and/or contextualises the practice (written work that has been co-authored is not permissible for transfer assessment purposes);
    - A planned schedule for completion of the thesis (for example using a Gantt chart) within the standard period of study (three years full-time or six years part-time);
    - A draft plan of chapter headings for the final thesis;
    - Progress Report, covering work carried out to date, a description of the key research question and how this has been refined, and a proposal of how the research and thesis will be completed(report submitted online via eVision);
    - Training Plan and record of training undertaken;
    - Report on the PGR’s progress from the supervisory team;
    - Supervision reports covering the previous 12 month period.

**PGRs on Professional Doctorates** will follow a similar process for transfer, however the written work will consist of the research proposal (see [Section 16](#_Professional_Doctorates_(see) for further information).

## Transfer Assessment Panel Meeting

The transfer assessment meeting should be conducted as a face-to-face or online meeting.

Transfer Assessment Panels must comprise at least two academics with research expertise from the same or a cognate subject or discipline as the PGR, who are independent of the supervisory team[[4]](#footnote-4). The Chair of the panel must either have successful supervision of a doctoral PGR to completion or research degree examination experience. The role of the panel is to read the written submission and conduct the transfer review.

In exceptional cases, consideration may be given by RDC for the use of an External Assessor on the Transfer Assessment Panel. Such cases might, for example, include situations where it is not possible to identify a member of staff who has relevant expertise and who is unconnected with the supervision of the PGR[[5]](#footnote-5). Where an External Assessor is approved for appointment, the SPGRL is responsible for ensuring that the Assessor is fully briefed on the regulations and procedures. It is **not possible** for the same individual to act as the External Assessor at transfer stage and as the External Examiner for the final examination of the candidate.

Supervisors may attend the transfer review as observers/note-takers at the request of the PGR.

## Recommendation of the transfer panel

The recommendation of the transfer panel will be one of the following:

* + - transfer to full PhD registration;
    - transfer to MPhil registration (transfer to a Masters by Research at this stage is not permitted);
    - on the first occasion only, and provided that the University’s prescribed time limit allows, deferral of a decision about transfer for a limited period to permit the work to be revised and then reassessed. If a transfer decision is deferred, a final decision must be made with 18 months of the start date for full-time PGRs or within 30 months for part time PGRs;
    - a decision that the PGR will be required to withdraw from the research degree.

PGRs should be asked to leave the transfer review meeting whilst the members of the Transfer Assessment Panel deliberate their decision before being called back to the meeting to be informed of the panel’s recommendation.

The recommendation must be agreed by all members of the Transfer Assessment Panel and will be recorded on the Joint Report of the Transfer Assessment Panel by the Chair of the Panel. The Chair will complete the report on behalf of the Panel within **10 working days** of the transfer assessment meeting and submit to the SPGRL via eVision. The SPGRL should approve the report via eVision within **5 working days** and the report will then be available for the PGR to view.

Registry will update the student record and progress stage for the PGR.

Where there are complex circumstances in an individual PGR’s transfer assessment the SPGRL may refer the report to RDC for consideration and approval (under reserved business). If a recommendation other than transfer to doctoral registration has been made (i.e. deferral of decision, transfer to MPhil or withdrawal) the transfer assessment report must be referred to RDC for consideration.

RDC will receive a list of the reports approved by the SPGRL.

For PGRs registered on practice-led programmes details of the work that will contribute to their final submission will need to be included in the report.

## Deferral of the transfer decision

The Transfer Assessment Panel may, on academic grounds, make a case for the deferral of the transfer decision when a realistic plan for completion of the thesis, within the standard period of study, is not evident. The decision should be deferred pending the receipt of a satisfactory plan.

The period of any deferral is normally no more than three months and cannot be more than six months. In all cases, a final decision must be reached within the time limit specified (see section 8.2 above).

The PGR must be given, in writing, clear guidance on why the work submitted is not of the right standard, details of the further work required by the Transfer Assessment Panel and the revised deadline for submission. This information will be contained in the Joint Report of the Transfer Assessment Panel and should be given to the PGR and main supervisor **within 2 working days** of the meeting.

In the event that a decision on transfer is deferred it is expected that all members of the Transfer Assessment Panel will be involved in the re-assessment.

It should also be explained to the PGR that they will be required to attend a second transfer review if the Transfer Assessment Panel is not satisfied with the revised material. All deferred PGRs must be offered a second transfer review if, after considering the resubmitted work, the Transfer Assessment Panel is of the view that, from the consideration of the written submission, the PGR has not met the criteria for transfer. PGRs and Panel members must make themselves available for the second transfer review within a reasonable period of time.

Deferred PGRs should only proceed to further data collection following careful consideration by their supervisors and/or SPGRL.

If the Transfer Assessment Panel is unable to make a recommendation that the PGR should proceed to either PhD or MPhil study within the time limit allowed for transfer then the PGR must withdraw. Where a grant-funded PGR initially registered for a provisional PhD is recommended to proceed to an MPhil, the grant awarding authority should be informed and the necessary adjustment in funding made.

# Unsatisfactory Academic Progress Procedure (UAPP)

## Purpose of the UAPP

The University is required to monitor the attendance and performance of PGRs as part of its quality control and pastoral obligations. The University is accountable to the public authorities which finance programmes of study, professional bodies and to the UK Home Office. It is also aware of the considerable commitment of time and resource made by PGRs and their families and seeks to ensure that such commitment is made in reasonable expectation of PGR success.

The purpose of the *Unsatisfactory Academic Progress Procedure* (UAPP) is to investigate concerns about the PGR’s ability to complete their degree successfully within the remaining period of study and the possibility that, with an immediate improvement in academic performance, the position may be rescued.

These actions are taken in the context that RDC will ensure the application of academic regulations relating to progress and award, which may result in termination of programme. The UAPP does not apply in relation to non-academic disciplinary matters which are dealt with under the *University’s Code of Conduct and Disciplinary procedures.*  Matters relating to PGR health which come to light in the course of an UAPP meeting may be referred for further consideration under the *Fitness to Study Procedures* if this is deemed appropriate.

Instigation of the UAPPmay take place at any stage in a research degree (that is both before and after the transfer stage and during the overtime period).

A PGR can expect, as part of the normal supervisory process, for their supervisor(s) to draw to their attention problems with their academic progress when they arise. This should be done in writing and records kept in the PGR’s file.

Unsatisfactory academic progress is usually identified when a PGR has not met the requirements set out under responsibilities of the PGR in Section 4. Examples of unsatisfactory academic progress include:

* + - * Failure to provide evidence of satisfactory progress;
      * Failure to present written work to an adequate standard;
      * Failure to present work to an agreed timescale;
      * Failure to maintain regular contact with their supervisor(s) and to attend formal supervision meetings.

## Instigation of the UAPP

Initially the supervisor(s) will raise concerns about academic progress in writing with the PGR. This is an informal stage, but it is best practice to also inform the SPGRL. In cases where the SPGRL is one of the PGR’s supervisors, the Head of School should be informed.

If there is no improvement after the supervisor has raised concerns and no satisfactory explanation provided by the PGR regarding the level of progress, then the supervisor(s) should formally bring the matter to the attention of the SPGRL. In cases where the SPGRL is one of the candidate’s supervisors the Head of School should be informed. Before bringing the matter to the attention of the SPGRL/Head of School it is expected that:

* + - * the supervisors will consider the issue between themselves;
      * there will be evidence of written feedback to the PGR outlining the unsatisfactory academic progress (e.g. warning letter(s)/email(s), comments in the supervision log and/or formal progress reports) and indicating what progress is required;

the PGR will have had the opportunity to raise with the supervisor(s) and/or Postgraduate Research Tutor (PGRT) any circumstances which have prevented their ability to progress satisfactorily.

Normally the SPGRL will manage the process, but if they are a member of the PGR’s supervisory team or is their PGRT, then the SPGRL should draw the matter to the attention of the Head of School. The Head of School should then identify a senior member of the academic staff in the School who has had no prior involvement with the supervision of the PGR to manage the Procedure on their behalf.

If the concerns raised relate to the absence of a research degree PGR, and there has been no contact with the PGR within a 2 month period (unless absence has been authorised for events such as fieldwork, illness etc.), the SPGRL (or Head of School’s delegate) should seek advice from Registry on whether the attendance monitoring requirements have been met.

SPGRL (or Head of School’s delegate) will consider whether the concerns raised by the supervisor(s) are sufficiently serious to:

1. Warrant the instigation of the UAPP*.* That is that the concerns expressed adversely impact on the PGR’s ability to complete their degree successfully within the remaining period of study but that there is at least some possibility that, with an immediate improvement in academic performance, the position may be rescued. If this is the case then the UAPPshould be instigated. The SPGRL (or Head of School’s delegate) will immediately write to the PGR concerned informing them that the UAPPhas been instigated, the reasons for this, that a meeting has been arranged and informing them of the date, time and venue of the meeting. Notification will always be in writing and will give at least three working days’ notice. Before reaching this decision there must be written evidence that the supervisor(s) has previously drawn to the attention of the PGR concerns regarding their academic progress. It is expected that the meeting will normally take place within 10 working days of the issue of the letter. The PGR must be advised that they may choose to be accompanied by a ‘supporter’ (see Section 10.8.2) to the meeting, who may speak on behalf of the PGR. The supporter may be the YSJ Students’ Union Vice-president Education and Welfare at the invitation of the PGR. (See **Example Letter One**)

**OR**

(b) Warrant an immediate recommendation to RDC that the PGR be required to withdraw from their studies immediately due to unsatisfactory academic progress. **This course of action, without instigation of the UAPP, will occur only in the most exceptional cases**. For a recommendation to be made to RDC for immediate withdrawal there must be:

* clear evidence that serious concerns about academic progress have been made in writing to the PGR over a prolonged period of time (4 months or more)
* evidence that support mechanisms have been made available to the PGR to address these concerns
* a satisfactory explanation provided as to why it is not possible for realistic targets to be set and the PGR granted a further opportunity to improve progress under the UAPP.

The appropriate pro forma must be completed and returned to Registry for consideration by RDC.

## Conduct of an Unsatisfactory Academic Progress Meeting

Normally the SPGRL (or Head of School’s delegate), at least one member of the supervisory team (normally the main supervisor) and PGR (who we would encourage to be accompanied by a supporter, e.g. a YSJ Student Union representative) will attend the unsatisfactory progress meeting. There will normally also be an official minute taker. Where a member of staff cannot attend the meeting, a written report may be submitted. The purpose of the unsatisfactory progress meeting will be to:

* + - * Advise the PGR formally that their academic progress is deemed unsatisfactory and detail the reasons for concern;
      * Reassure the PGR that the purpose of the meeting is to identify ways to address the supervisor(s) concerns and to support their future progress;
      * Receive a summary of the PGR’s performance and relevant reports from supervisors;
      * Give the PGR the opportunity to raise any mitigating circumstances;
      * Set clear, realistic and measurable targets for improving performance which allow the PGR to demonstrate satisfactory progress;
      * Identify any training needs and support mechanisms. At least one formal supervisory meeting must take place before the final formal review meeting is held;
      * Explain who will assess, and how, whether the set targets have been completed satisfactorily. Where the academic standard of work is to be considered, evaluation of any work must be completed by at least one of the supervisors and at least one senior member of the academic staff who is independent of the supervisory team but who is from the same or from a cognate subject area or discipline to the PGR’s area of research;
      * Explain that continued unsatisfactory progress may lead to a recommendation for termination of the candidature (or in some cases transfer to a lower award);
      * Set a date for the final formal review of the UAPP. For a full-time PGR this will normally be no less than two months, and no more than three months, from the date of the meeting in which the UAPP is instigated. For a part-time candidate this will normally be no less than 3 months and no more than five months from the date of this meeting;
      * Where progress is deemed unsatisfactory prior to the transfer stage and the timescale does not allow the UAPP to conclude, it will not be necessary to hold a separate final review meeting. The formal transfer stage (*viva voce* examination and review by a Transfer Assessment Panel) will provide an appropriate measure of progress. The PGR should be informed that this will be the case.

If the PGR fails to attend a meeting to which they have been called, decisions will be taken by the Committee in their absence.

Unsatisfactory Academic Progress Meetings and the resulting recommendations will always be minuted; draft minutes normally approved within three working days and minutes normally published within five working days. The PGR will always receive a copy of the minutes of the meeting, which will be emailed to their University email address. A copy of the minutes must be added to Registry for the central PGR file.

## Action following the Unsatisfactory Academic Progress Meeting

Following the Unsatisfactory Academic Progress Meeting the SPGRL (or Head of School or Head of School’s delegate) will:

1. Write to the PGR to confirm that either:   
   (i) the UAPP has been instigated and to provide notes of the meeting and the required action plan with milestones. It is good practice to set a date for the formal review meeting at this stage (**Example Letter Two (a)** or where progress will be assessed under the formal transfer process **Example Letter Two (b)**)

or  
(ii) it has been agreed that it is not appropriate to instigate the UAPP and no further action will be taken (see **Example Letter Three**) on this occasion

1. Complete, in the case of (a) (i) above the *Unsatisfactory Academic Progress Procedure pro forma* (stage one) and return it to Registry (for the information of RDC) to advise that the UAPP has been instigated in respect of a particular PGR.

## Unsatisfactory Academic Progress Final Formal Review Meeting

A formal review meeting will take place to assess the PGR’s progress against the action plan and milestones. Normally the SPGRL (or Head of School’s delegate), at least one member of the supervisory team (normally the main supervisor) and PGR (who may choose to be accompanied by a supporter) will attend the meeting. There must also be an official minute taker. There are 4 possible outcomes to the meeting:

1. Agree the PGR has made satisfactory progress against the agreed action plan and milestones and that no further action will be taken under the UAPP;
2. Agree that a decision on progression be deferred. For a full-time PGR the maximum period by which a decision may be deferred is 3 months (it is expected, however, that in most cases the period of deferral will be less than 3 months);
3. Agree that the PGR has not made satisfactory progress with the agreed action plan and milestones. In cases where the remaining period of study allows[[6]](#footnote-6), make a recommendation to RDC that the PGR be transferred to registration for a lower degree;
4. Agree that the PGR has not made satisfactory progress with the agreed action plan and milestones and that a recommendation will be made, to RDC, that the research degree candidature be terminated.

The PGR will have the right of appeal following a decision under the arrangements set out in the *Student Appeals Procedure*. The PGR may seek advice/guidance from YSJ Students’ Union.

Unsatisfactory Academic Progress Final Formal Review Meetings will always be minuted; draft minutes are normally approved within three working days and minutes normally published within five working days. The PGR will always receive a copy of the minutes of the meeting, and a copy of the minutes must be sent to Registry for the central PGR file.

On those occasions at which progress will be determined at the formal transfer stage (*viva voce* examination and academic review by a Transfer Assessment Panel) the usual transfer arrangements will apply and a Panel composed in accordance with Section 9will be appointed. It is not appropriate, in these cases, for a ‘supporter’ to attend the *viva voce* examination.

## Action following the UAPP Formal Review Meeting

Immediately following the formal review meeting the SPGRL (or Head of School’s delegate) will:

1. Inform the PGR in writing of the outcome of the meeting (**Example Letters Four, Five and Six**);
2. Complete the *Unsatisfactory Academic Progress Procedure* *pro forma* (stage 2) and return it to Registry. Where a recommendation is made that the candidature be terminated as a result of unsatisfactory academic progress (or for transfer to a lower degree) Registry will arrange for the recommendation to be considered by RDC.

Action will be taken by RDC to consider the recommendation. In all cases RDC will wish to see evidence that the UAPP has been followed. A letter will be sent to the PGR by Registry confirming the decision of the Group.

## Expectations of a PGR to attend a UAPP Meeting

It is expected that a PGR will attend an Unsatisfactory Academic Progress Meeting on the date and at the time proposed. Normally this will be a face-to-face meeting. In some circumstances, for example when the PGR is not in the UK, the meeting may be held an agreed form of electronic meeting (e.g. MS Teams, Skype, Zoom, FaceTime). Where the PGR is unable to attend for genuine reason they must advise the SPGRL (or Head of School or Head of School’s delegate) immediately and provide an explanation for their unavailability (with documentary evidence where appropriate).

If the PGR does not attend a meeting to discuss their unsatisfactory academic progress within a reasonable timescale and without a reasonable and timely explanation the meeting should be held in their absence and a record of the meeting should be sent to the PGR as soon as possible thereafter. Failure to attend the meeting will not prevent the instigation or conclusion of the UAPP.

The unavailability of a member of staff from YSJU Student Union to accompany a PGR to a meeting will be regarded as reasonable grounds upon which to request the meeting is re-scheduled provided that the PGR has sought such support within a reasonable timescale of receiving notification of the meeting date and can provide evidence to this effect.

## Further Advice and Support for PGRs on the UAPP

PGRs seeking advice and support may contact YSJ Students’ Union.

The PGR may choose to be accompanied by a single supporter to a meeting under this procedure who may be anyone of the PGR’s choosing (e.g. family member, friend, fellow PGR, YSJ Students’ Union staff). The role of the supporter is to provide support to the PGR at the meeting. For example, by taking notes during the meeting, or prompting the PGR if they omit to mention something of importance. The supporter is not normally permitted to represent the PGR or to speak on their behalf and they cannot normally appear if the PGR is not present in person[[7]](#footnote-7).

# Examination

## Examination Requirements

The ‘[Regulations for Research Degrees](https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/policies-and-documents/regulations/)’, ‘[Guide to the examination process for research degrees](https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/media/content-assets/registry/research-degrees/thesis-submission-and-examination/Guide-to-the-examination-process-for-research-degrees.docx)’ and ‘Instructions to examiners for research degree examinations ( [MA by R](https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/media/content-assets/registry/research-degrees/thesis-submission-and-examination/Instructions-to-examiners-for-research-degree-examinations-(MbR-post-Oct-2021-entry).docx) / [PhD, MPhil, Prof Doc](https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/media/content-assets/registry/research-degrees/thesis-submission-and-examination/Instructions-to-examiners-for-research-degree-examinations-(MPhil,-PhD,-Prof-Doc).docx)) prescribe the detailed procedures for assessment of YSJU research degrees.

The ‘[Guide to the examination process for research degrees](https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/media/content-assets/registry/research-degrees/thesis-submission-and-examination/Guide-to-the-examination-process-for-research-degrees.docx)’ includes full details of the requirements for the format and presentation of a YSJU thesis, and the steps and timescales for submission and assessment of the thesis from examination entry through to award and graduation from a PGR perspective. PGRs should ensure they are familiar with these requirements before submitting their thesis.

The ‘Instructions to examiners for research degree examinations’ ( [MA by R](https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/media/content-assets/registry/research-degrees/thesis-submission-and-examination/Instructions-to-examiners-for-research-degree-examinations-(MbR-post-Oct-2021-entry).docx) / [PhD MPhil, Prof Doc](https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/media/content-assets/registry/research-degrees/thesis-submission-and-examination/Instructions-to-examiners-for-research-degree-examinations-(MPhil,-PhD,-Prof-Doc).docx) ) provides full details of the steps and timescales for the assessment of the thesis from an examiner perspective.

**PhD by Distance Learning:**  see additional guidance in [Section 17](#_PhD_by_Distance).

**PhD by Published Work:** see additional guidance in [Section 18](#_PhD_by_Published).

## Entering for Examination

The online Application for Assessment should be completed at least three months before submission of the thesis. This process will finalise the title of the thesis, provide details of proposed examiners and will ensure appropriate governance in respect of the research being submitted as part of the research degree.

The PGR should initiate completion of the form via eVision and it will then require input from the supervisory team. The main supervisor should approach potential examiners and complete their section of the form. The SPGRL will review the contents of the form, nominate the independent chair and submit the form.

Registry will check the information on the form, confirm eligibility of the proposed examiners/independent chair and arrange for RDEP to consider the form. RDEP will review and approve the recommendations for the appointment of examiners and the independent chair.

## Eligibility Criteria for Examiners and Independent Chairs

Particular attention should be given to the number and composition of examiners required for the specific degree under examination. Full details are available in the ‘Guide to the examination process for research degrees’.

To identify approval individuals to nominate for the roles of internal examiner, external examiner and independent chairs supervisors and SPGRLs should refer to the ‘[Criteria for the appointment of Examiners and Independent Chairs](https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/media/content-assets/registry/research-degrees/eligibility-criteria-and-roles/Criteria-for-the-appointment-of-examiners.docx)’.

Responsibility for the consideration of recommendations for the appointment of examiners and independent chairs rests with RDEP.

Internal examiners and independent chairs are required to complete an online training course before acting in the capacity. Briefings are also given to external examiners when required by RDEP. In order to ensure consistency within the examination process, examiners receive written instructions on the relevant YSJU procedures together with the criteria for the recognition of different levels of achievement. These instructions are supplied to all staff involved in examinations.

## Submitting the thesis

The thesis should be submitted at the end of the standard period of study (unless a reduction has been approved) and within the maximum period of registration for the degree on which the PGR is registered.

PGRs must submit the eThesis in the correct format along with a Thesis Submission Form. Additional soft bound copies of the thesis may also be required if one or more of the appointed examiners have requested one.

Registry will check the format of the thesis and dispatch it to the examiners, normally within two working days of submission.

## Examination of the thesis

Full details of examination arrangements are provided in the ‘Guide to the examination process for research degrees’.

Examiners are asked to accept a timescale of 3 months in which to complete the examination. Arrangements for the examination will be co-ordinated by Registry.

Examination of Masters by Research theses for PGRs who have commenced their programme of study with effect from October 2021 will be examined on the basis of the submitted thesis, with no requirement for an oral examination.

For all other research degrees (doctoral and MPhil), including Masters by Research with a start date prior to October 2021, an oral examination of the thesis will be conducted.

Oral examinations will normally be conducted as an online examination meeting, unless it is agreed that an on-campus examination should to be held. An independent ‘non-examining’ chair will be present and all oral examinations will be audio or video recorded in line with the ‘Policy on the Recording of Oral Examinations’.

Where an oral examination is held the examiners must prepare separate, independent written reports before the oral examination.

A supervisor may be an observer at an oral examination at the request of the PGR and, if not present, must be available for consultation with the examiners if required.

## Outcome of the examination

The outcome of the examination will be given to PGRs as follows:

* + - * Oral examination: the examiners will usually notify the PGR of their recommendation after the oral examination and must do so within 24 hours. Registry will also send formal written confirmation of the outcome to the PGR.
      * Examiner assessment of the thesis (Masters by Research candidates starting with effect from October 2021 only): the recommendation will be sent to the PGR by Registry once received from the external examiner.

Where appropriate, information about the [Appeals Procedure](https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/policies-and-documents/appeals-and-complaints/) must be provided to the PGR.

An examination report containing a recommendation for the outcome in accordance with stipulated YSJU criteria will be completed following the examination. In all cases the examiners’ recommendation is subject to final approval by the Progress and Award Examination Panel.

PGRs who have passed subject to amendments being made to the thesis should begin making the amendments **as soon as they receive the amendments** and submit the amended thesis by the deadline date.

PGRs who have not been awarded the degree but who are permitted to re-submit their thesis will receive ‘recommendations for re-submission’ to aid them in preparing for re-submission. These recommendations require the approval of RDEP before they can be released to the PGR. The maximum deadline for re-submission will be calculated from the date that the recommendations are released to the PGR.

## Release of the Examiners’ Report

The Examiners’ Report requires approval by RDEP and will be automatically released to the PGR and the supervisory team.

## Deposit of the final eThesis

The final version of the eThesis (including any approved required corrections) should be deposited by no later than one month after the examiner has approved the amendments made to the thesis.

## Award of the degree

Once the award has been approved by the Progress and Award Examination Panel, Registry will send an award letter to the PGR.

## Graduation

PGRs are eligible to graduate *in absentia* or at a degree ceremony and must inform Registry of their preference.

# Student Representation and Feedback

PGRs will be represented on RDC and Research Committee. PGR representatives will not be involved in the consideration of matters relating to individual PGR cases. YSJU Students’ Union provides a mechanism for PGRs to nominate and elect PGR representatives.

YSJU periodically surveys PGRs about their experience and satisfaction with arrangements and facilities for research degrees. Feedback in all forms is welcomed at any time to relevant Heads of Service, Directors and Schools.

# Complaints and Appeals

## Complaints

YSJU is committed to giving its PGRs the best learning experience it can. It prides itself on being a responsive and supportive organisation and in listening to its PGRs, but recognises that they may sometimes encounter problems. If a PGR is dissatisfied with any aspect of YSJU’s provision, they should first try to deal with the problem by discussing it with the member of staff most immediately concerned. Many problems can be speedily resolved by a direct approach.

In cases where PGRs do not feel that they have received a satisfactory response to a direct approach, or feel unable to raise the problem locally, advice may be sought from supervisors, the Postgraduate Research Tutor, SPGRL, Academic Registrar or YSJU Students’ Union. Where appropriate, an informal resolution may be sought.

If an informal resolution is not appropriate, or is regarded as unsatisfactory, PGRs should refer to the University’s [Complaints Procedure](https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/policies-and-documents/appeals-and-complaints/)*.*

The Student Casework Manager ([casework@yorksj.ac.uk](mailto:casework@yorksj.ac.uk)) can answer general questions about the complaints process. YSJ Students’ Union can provide independent advice and support to PGRs who wish to make a complaint.

If the PGR remains dissatisfied once YSJU’s procedures have been exhausted, a review of the decision may be sought from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA). More information can be found on the OIA website: [www.oiahe.org.uk](http://www.oiahe.org.uk)

## Appeals

PGRs may appeal decisions relating to their registration status, progression or award. Full details are set out in the [Appeals Procedure.](https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/policies-and-documents/appeals-and-complaints/)

# Minimum Standards of Facilities Provision

RDC has specified that access to facilities such as printing, photocopying and common room facilities for full-time PGRs should be commensurate with the requirements for the research being conducted by the PGR. At YSJU these facilities are mainly provided in the Graduate Centre in Holgate Building.

Specialist equipment and computer software/hardware resourcing issues are the responsibility of the Schools, and PGRs’ requirements must be considered prior to accepting any PGR.

The University provides library services for PGRs, however, it is recognised that no one library can satisfy researchers’ needs, so to support PGRs additional services are provided including unlimited access to interlibrary loans.

PGRs should consider the requirements and demands that their research project is likely to need for IT hardware/software and internet access and discuss these with their supervisory team, particularly where there may be difficulties in accessing suitable resources. It may be possible for the University to provide additional support where specific needs are identified, but that is not guaranteed, and students should expect to provide their own IT equipment and internet access.

# Practice-led Research Degrees

## Introduction

This supplementary protocol outlines specific arrangements for PhD, MPhil and MA practice-led PGRs and **must** be read in conjunction with the University’s ‘Code of Practice for Research Degrees’. Practice-led research degrees are currently only available in the following Schools:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| School | PhD Practice-led | MPhil Practice-led | MA Practice-led |
| Arts | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Humanities | Yes | Yes | No |
| Science, Technology & Health | Yes | Yes | No |

## Admission

PGRs registered for practice-led research degrees will be recorded as such under specified codes set up on the student records system. Applicants for practice-led research degrees are identified from the point that they enter the YSJU admissions system.

## Training

Practice-led PGRs in the School of the Arts, School of Humanities and School of Science, Technology & Health will be provided with access to practice-led research methodology.

PGRs should work with supervisors to identify if an appropriate taught MA level module would support them in the development and understanding of practice-led research methodologies, particularly in terms of concepts of knowledge and the relationship between practice and theory; practice and experience; practice and knowledge.

PGRs will be invited to attend regular talks by artists/practitioners that have a particular focus on practice-led research which are to be hosted by the relevant School.

## Engagement with research seminars

Schools organise a wide range of research seminars, including from staff and visiting researchers, and PGRs will be invited. Research seminars explore methodological questions and issues, including practice-led research; engagement with epistemologies of knowing; documentation and representation of practice-led research; research into, about and through the arts; ethics and participation in practice-led research; the relationship between theory and practice.

The seminar series would also provide opportunities for PGRs to present their own research in progress, both in the form of papers and practice-led workshops.

## Practice-led blog

All practice-led PGRs should be encouraged to actively maintain an on-going practice-led blog. This would overarch the above two activities – in terms of providing a site to record documentation, papers, reading lists etc.

The practice-led blog would be particularly useful in supporting part-time PGRs.

## **Practice-led transfer** assessment

The PGR and School should clarify at the transfer stage if a doctoral research project is still defined as practice-led. It is not possible to change to a practice-led research degree after transfer.

If a PGR is pursuing a practice-led research project then the transfer submission must include evidence of creative practice which, depending upon the nature of the practice, might be a creative writing component, the staging of an exhibition of visual work, a live performance, or the documentation of creative practice/performance in a retainable form. This should be accompanied by a written piece of at least 5,000 words that critically reviews, analyses and/or contextualises the practice. The PGR must be required to demonstrate the ability to link practice with the written analysis.

In addition to the usual requirements for transfer, a practice-led PGR must set out what they expect to include for assessment as the final submission. This must meet the regulations for alternative submissions as set out below.

It is important to identify at transfer stage if the PGR intends to include live performance or practice as part of the final submission and, if this will take place prior to submission of the written element, to facilitate arrangements for the early appointment of examiners (an Application for Assessmentmust therefore be filled in 3 months prior to the date of the first live practice).

An intention stated at the transfer stage to include live performance or practice in the final examination will not be binding. If research determines that a live element is no longer required (or dates change), this should be reported as soon as possible and will not have any adverse consequences for the PGR. However, PGRs who do not declare an intention to include live practice at transfer stage will not be permitted to include live practice as part of the submission.

## Deferral of transfer assessment

In accordance with procedures for transfer, PGRs could be offered more time to rethink or redo the practice elements. A case for deferral of the transfer decision would have to be made by the SPGRL, on academic grounds, to the RDC.

## Application for assessment

PGRs on practice-led research degrees must submit their *Application for Assessment* a minimum of 3 months prior to the date of the first live practice (where examiners are required to view live practice). Where there is no examined live practice event, then the application must be returned a minimum of 3 months prior to the expected submission date of the thesis.

## Assessment of Live Practice/Early Appointment of Examiners

Where it is considered to be part of the final submission, examiners are normally expected to view live practice. However, all practice for assessment must be recorded in an appropriate format as a permanent record (see below).

PGRs should indicate at the transfer stage the intention for live practice to be included in the final assessment and as soon as possible provide details of date, venue and time. As this will need to be negotiated and agreed with potential examiners, it may therefore be necessary to identify and appoint examiners at an early stage. The letter of appointment to examiners will include details of any live practice indicated by the School on the Application for Assessment which will form part of the submission.

Once examiners have been appointed, the SPGRL is responsible for ensuring examiners receive detailed information of date, venue and time of any live practice to be assessed. Please note in some instances this may include more than one event, as outlined and agreed at transfer. It is recommended that the School (and PGR) consider examiners’ availability when arranging live practice. Further guidance on the recording and assessment of live practice is provided below.

## Alternative Submission

PGRs on an approved practice-led route must submit a substantial body of creative practice together with a related written submission as detailed below. PGRs undertaking practice-led research may be granted permission by RDEP to present for examination an alternative form of thesis.

## Format Regulations

All practice for assessment must be recorded in an appropriate format as a permanent record, which complies with requirements specified by the University (including any live practice that has been assessed). PGRs must obtain the appropriate permissions from other people involved in the performance and recording of live practice and they must comply with the University’s ethical procedures and legal requirements of the Data Protection Act.

## Thesis length

The minimum and maximum word limits for all practice-led research degrees are as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Degree | Minimum word limit | Maximum word limit |
| PhD | 25,000 | 50,000 |
| MPhil | 20,000 | 30,000 |
| MA by Research | 5,000 | 10,000 |

## Submission for examination

Where the final submission comprises practice for assessment, in addition to the written thesis, the assessed (and associated) documentation must be submitted to the Research Degree Submission system on Moodle prior to examination:

* + - Electronic version of the thesis (PDF format), presented in accordance with the ‘Guide to the examination process for research degrees’,and all other submitted material (in an appropriate file format).
    - A record of the practice for assessment, and associated documentation, should be presented in an appropriate format for archiving purposes.

Examiners will also be given the option of receiving a hard copy (soft bound) in addition to the electronic version. Once the examiners have been appointed candidates will be notified by Registry as to whether any soft bound copies of the thesis will be required. If one or more soft bound copies of the thesis are required the appropriate number of CDs, DVDs or other approved media for submission should also be submitted in standard slip-cases which should be clearly labelled with detailed contents.

## Submission of the final eThesis

All final documentation submitted after a successful examination must be submitted to the Research Degree Submission system in Moodle in appropriate electronic files (for example pdf, jpeg, mp3), presented in accordance with the instructions given in the ‘Guide to the examination process for research degrees’ for retention in the University’s Digital Repository (RaY).

Options for the format of storing live practice should be discussed with the supervisor who will liaise as appropriate with Library & Learning Services and with Registry.

## Advice for examiners

Practice must be integral within the methodology and dissemination of a practice-led research degree and the final assessment should consider the submission as a whole (practice and written element). In reaching a decision upon the quality of a practice-led submission it is important that examiners do not assess practice and written elements separately.

There must be no formative feedback by examiners prior to the examination (for example, after an assessment of live practice); feedback should only be given after the examination has concluded. Any notes taken at a live practice/performance must not be disclosed and must be retained by the examiner until included in the preliminary report, immediately prior to the final examination.

As noted above, examiners should consider the submission as a whole. Where live practice is held on the same day as an oral examination, examiners may wish to add notes to the end of the preliminary report prior to the oral examination.

The structure of an oral examination itself may vary depending on circumstances. For instance, the examiners could ask a candidate to reproduce a live performance or a similar task to demonstrate any aspect of practice, or give a short presentation at the start of the examination. The candidate should be given at least 2 weeks’ notice if this is required and the arrangements must be made through Registry.

## Award

Successful candidates will be awarded Doctor of Philosophy, Master of Philosophy or Master of Arts by Research as appropriate.

# Professional Doctorates

## Introduction

This supplementary protocol outlines specific arrangements for PGRs on Professional Doctorate programmes and **must** be read in conjunction with the University’s *‘Code of Practice for Research Degrees’*. Professional doctorates are only available in the following Schools:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| School | Professional doctorate |
| Education, Language & Psychology | Education |
| Education, Language & Psychology | Applied Linguistics |
| Humanities | Ministry |

## Admission

Admission to the programme will be decided by an interview panel, and no candidates will be admitted solely on the basis of previous awards or professional experience. The normal minimum entrance qualifications will be an upper second-class honours degree in a related subject area (or equivalent) and at least two years of relevant professional experience.

All candidates must also currently be in a professional role that is relevant to the intended award. The relevance of past and current experience to a particular award will be judged at interview. Candidates with eligible professional experience may be admitted to the programme without the required academic qualifications provided they can demonstrate through other means that they have the necessary skills to study and research at doctoral level. This will usually be through the production of a piece of written work specified by the relevant course leader prior to interview.

PGRs registered for professional doctorates will be recorded as such under specified codes set up on the student records system. Applicants will complete an application form specific to professional doctorate programmes and provide a letter of application in place of a PhD proposal.

## Programme Structure

Professional doctorates are delivered part-time over a period of 4-6 years in two stages.

## Stage 1 – taught component

Stage 1 (years 1 and 2) will require PGRs to attend two residentials a year for two years and pass four 45-credit modules (two in each year). PGRs who fail will be allowed to resubmit according to University regulations, but will not be able to commence Stage 2 until all four modules are passed and they have successfully completed the transfer process.

The compulsory modules will be as follows:

* + - Module 8PD001: Identifying and articulating issues in professional practice
    - Module 8PD002: Contextualising issues in professional practice
    - Module 8PD003: Researching issues in professional practice
    - Module 8PD004: Influencing and impacting on issues in professional practice

Each module will be delivered by a mixture of face-to-face contact (at residentials) and distance learning (through a virtual learning environment). The modules will be common to all awards, and will include teaching sessions dedicated to PGRs on particular awards as well as sessions where all PGRs are taught together.

Alongside the requirements of the four modules, PGRs will be assigned supervisors for their research thesis. The process will start in Year 1 and must be completed by the first residential of Year 2. During Year 2 PGRs will work with their supervisors to produce a research proposal required for progression to Stage 2 of the programme (Year 3 onwards). The research proposal will be informed by the work done by the PGR for modules, but independent of it. The proposal must be ready for the PGR’s transfer panel, which will normally be held towards the end of Year 2.

## Transfer process

The process of transfer will be analogous to both the admissions and transfer processes of the PhD award. At this stage PGRs will need to have produced a research proposal, and this will be reviewed for its viability within the allowed timeframe (2-4 years) and potential originality. PGRs will be deemed to have produced evidence of critical ability and the ability to write at doctoral level by virtue of having passed their taught modules. However, at the transfer interview they will need to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the literature related to their chosen research topic, and the relevant research methods. They will also need to demonstrate that the research topic is aligned with the subject area of their intended award.

## Stage 2 – research component

Stage 2 will involve a mixture of both expert and collegial supervision. PGRs will continue to meet with others by attending at least one residential (in May) and a minimum of six supervision sessions that may be conducted face-to-face or via electronic media.

At this stage supervision and reviews will proceed according to the same rules and guidelines as for PhDs. There will be annual reviews held until the PGR submits the thesis, and opportunities for them to attend relevant University training sessions. Reviews will consider training requirements.

The annual residential for Stage 2 will be driven less by tutor input and more by the content and stage of PGRs’ research. PGRs will present to peer-groups their progress, engage in seminars, and discuss theoretical and practical issues linked to the research being undertaken. Some professional development or training may also be offered where common needs have been identified that could best be met at residentials. PGRs will have individual face-to-face supervision at residentials, and this would also be a suitable time to hold annual reviews. Outside residentials professional doctorate PGRs will have at least six supervision meetings and will also be able to interact with the programme VLE as they did in Stage 1. PGRs in Stage 2 could also be asked to help with the teaching of Stage 1 professional doctorate PGRs, offering particular insights from their experience on the programme.

## Residentials

Residentials will be held twice a year, in February and May, and will run over four days (Monday lunchtime to Thursday lunchtime). Contact time during the residentials will be approximately 30 hours, split between formal teaching and informal meetings. Taught sessions will include lectures, seminars and times of open discussion, split between plenaries and collegial sessions. The informal meetings will include organised meals and social gatherings which are deemed to be part of the learning experience as professional doctorate PGRs interact with each other.

Between residentials PGRs will have access to tutors (mainly via email, telephone or online media) and to material on the University VLE. PGRs will be encouraged to use social media to interact between residentials, either on the University VLE or on other widely-available platforms. Material on the VLE may include videos produced by tutors, as well as the usual links to resources or (where necessary) specific digitised material loaded through the University scanning service. Contact with tutors and peers between residentials will be through a range of different platforms and events.

## Assessment – Stage 1

PGRs will be required to attend two residentials a year for two years and pass four 45-credit modules, each assessed by the equivalent of an 8000-word written assignment. Each module will be assessed on a pass-fail basis, and each must be passed to enable PGRs to progress to Stage 2. PGRs who fail will be allowed to resubmit according to University regulations, but will not be able to commence Stage 2 until all four modules are passed and they have successfully completed the transfer process.

Assessments will be aligned with the particular contexts and interests of PGRs on each award, and will reflect the way that the module subject area is understood and applied in educational and/or faith-based contexts.

## Assessment – Transfer stage

Transfers panels will be constituted as for PhD transfers (see [section 9](#_Transfer_Assessment_Panel)) and will follow an analogous procedure, though the main evidence presented by candidates will be the research proposal. Transfer panels may allow PGRs at this stage to transfer onto a different named award within the programme suite, provided they can demonstrate that the subject of research is a better fit to a different award than the one on which they were originally enrolled. The transfer panel will be responsible for ensuring that the subject area of research could enable PGRs to achieve the learning outcomes of their chosen award.

## Assessment – Stage 2

Stage 2 (normally years 3-4 but could take up to 6 years) of the programme will involve independent research leading to the production of a research thesis (approximately 50,000 words), a 4-day residential element held once a year and individual supervision.

Assessment of the thesis will follow the regulations and procedures laid out for YSJU Research Degrees (see ‘Guide to the examination process for research degrees’), using the specific learning outcomes and thesis requirements for this programme as the criteria against which the work will be judged. Examination will be by oral examination, which the PGR must attend in person, and will be conducted by external and internal examiners.

## Award

Successful candidates will be awarded one of the following degrees, according to their programme of study:

* + - Professional Doctorate Education
    - Professional Doctorate Applied Linguistics
    - Professional Doctorate Ministry

# PhD by Distance Learning

## Introduction

This supplementary protocol outlines specific arrangements for PhD by Distance Learning programmes and **must** be read in conjunction with the University’s *‘Code of Practice for Research Degrees’*.

The PhD by distance learning is a variant of the normal University PhD offering and is available on either a full-time or part-time basis. Fees, supervision, assessment requirements and milestones are identical to PhDs undertaken on-campus, as are the expectations of time commitment and supervisory meetings. This protocol sets out additional requirements in respect of the distance learning option only.

## Admission

Whilst entry requirements and admission processes for the PhD by Distance Learning are as set out in Section 3 for on-campus programmes, in respect of those candidates who will be working off- campus they must also be able to demonstrate that they:

* Can successfully conduct their research with the resources available to them at their off-campus study site;
* Have access to appropriate IT facilities, in order to engage in supervision and training;
* Have the necessary time, commitment and appropriate attitude towards studying off-campus;
* Have access to support for disabilities, where appropriate.

A commitment statement should be agreed with the candidate to confirm these requirements prior to enrolment.

There will be two intakes per year, in February and October.

## Attendance requirements

Distance learning PGRs are not normally required to attend the University, except for induction and oral examination where attendance is expected. However, an exception to attendance in person at induction and oral examination may be requested where individuals are unable to do so. PGRs on distance learning programmes are expected to demonstrate attendance through participation in all designated academic engagements, including scheduled supervisory sessions.

## Supervision arrangements

Supervision should take place regularly through electronic means (e.g. MS Teams, Zoom, Skype, FaceTime, telephone). The commitment statement agreed with the PGR should set out the expectations for the frequency and mode of contact for supervision, along with the extent of face-to-face contact envisaged and arrangements for written reports on research progress.

## Library Resources

PGRs are able to access electronic library resources through the University but a means of accessing any hard copy materials which are unavailable electronically would need to be established.

# PhD by Published Work

## Introduction

This supplementary protocol outlines specific arrangements for PhD by Published Work programmes and **must** be read in conjunction with the University’s *‘Code of Practice for Research Degrees’*.

The PhD by Published Work is available to active postgraduate researchers in their field of expertise as a part-time programme. It is intended for candidates who already have a substantial body of published works that are equivalent to the traditional PhD by thesis. The published work must not have been published more than ten years prior to the date of registration.

## Definition of ‘Published Work’

The Research Excellence Framework defines research as a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared, and this is the definition adopted here, to encompass all disciplines. The term ‘Published Work’ has been used to reflect a variety of research outputs, including:

* Substantial or sole contributor to a book;
* Chapters in books;
* Papers/articles in refereed journals;
* Papers presented to conferences which are available in the published proceedings of the conference or are otherwise published (proceedings which are published with an ISSN);
* Patent applications or granted patents;
* Exhibitions or performances of which a permanent record has been made (for example, photographs, DVD or other medium).

## Candidate’s Eligibility

Candidates who meet the following criteria may, at the discretion of the University, be allowed to apply for the award of the degree of PhD (by Published Work). Candidates must be:

1. active researchers in their field of expertise before seeking permission to register for this degree; AND
2. must not submit material published more than ten years prior to the date when they are given permission to register for the degree; AND
3. have a significant and coherent body of published work.

Permission to register will not be granted to applicants who are in a position to submit for the PhD by Research or other professional doctorate or who already possess a PhD.

Candidates must not submit any published work that, in whole or in part, has been submitted in either published or unpublished form for another award, either at the University or at another institution.

100 per cent of the published work the candidate wishes to submit as part of the PhD should normally have been published prior to the submission of the application. Candidates may include publications which have not yet been published as long as all publications are at least in press at the point of application and appropriate evidence is submitted, but this can only make up 20 per cent of the published work.

## Application Process

Applicants must apply for candidature on the appropriate form through YSJU Admissions.

The applicant should initially submit the following:

a. Application Form

b. CV

c. Published Outputs to be assessed

d. A 500-word abstract.

The relevant School will appoint an internal assessor to give RDC an initial assessment on the appropriateness of the submission. The assessor may be the Head of School, the School Research & Knowledge Transfer Lead or the most appropriate subject specialist.

The internal assessor is not expected to read or examine the submission in full, but is asked to assess whether or not the submission appears to meet the criteria for the award of the degree, as specified in the ‘Code of Practice for Research Degrees’ and ‘Regulations for Research Degree Awards’, and is therefore, prima facie worthy of examination. The internal assessor should review it considering, as a minimum, the following criteria:

i. Does the submission form a coherent whole?

ii. Does the submission show a sound command of established knowledge in the field and make a significant contribution to the field?

iii. Does it appear to have taken the same amount of time and research effort as a PhD by Research?

iv. Does it meet the criteria in the ‘Code of Practice for Research Degrees’?

v. Does the submission appear appropriate, based on points i. to iv. above? Can a case of examination be made?

If the candidature is supported by the School, RDC (or a working group thereof) will consider the merits of the application on the basis of the list of works submitted for examination and the internal assessor's report. Registry will advise the applicant of the outcome of this initial consideration.

If the applicant's candidature is approved, RDC will ask the School to appoint a supervisor to assist the candidate with the format of their submission and the nature of the accompanying statement. This person may or may not be the original internal assessor.

## Supervisory arrangements

The aim of supervision is to:

* 1. give guidance on the selection, coherence and quality of the work to be submitted for examination;

1. enable the development of the critical review of the work being submitted; and
2. to prepare the candidate for the oral examination.

It is expected that a minimum of two supervision meetings will be held to assist the candidate with the format of their submission and the nature of the accompanying statement.

## Assessment

Applicants will be required to pay the relevant fees following approval of their candidature. Fees will be set at half the tuition fee for UK/EU entrants to postgraduate research degrees for the year of entry.

The applicant should submit an online Application for Assessment via eVision at least three months (and not less than two months) prior to submitting their critical review (in lieu of thesis). Examiners will be appointed in accordance with the ‘Criteria for the appointment of examiners and independent chairs’ and will be subject to approval by RDEP.

The Candidate must submit to Registry their abstract, a critical review of their submitted work, and portfolio of work normally within 3 to 12 months of registration. These documents should meet the following requirements:

1. The submitted portfolio of published research must add up to a substantial and coherent body of work which would have taken the equivalent of three years of full-time study to accomplish. It must consist of work which is already in the public domain. Where publications are in the press, appropriate evidence must be provided.
2. Each piece of published research should be an original piece, providing novelty and breadth of research, and there should be evidence of rigorous peer-review processes in place for the published works.
3. The structure and the format of the submission may vary and include original material and a range of media. Some examples are:
   1. A book or chapter(s) in a book;
   2. A performance;
   3. An exhibition;
   4. Refereed articles/papers in journals;
   5. Conference papers or proceedings.
4. The candidate should not submit material published more than ten years prior to the date when they registered for the degree.
5. The critical review should:
6. summarise the aims, objectives, methodology, results and conclusions covered by all the submitted work in the portfolio;
7. indicate how the publications form a coherent body of work, what contribution the candidate has made to this work and how the work contributes significantly to the expansion of knowledge;
8. be at least 10,000 words in length, but not more than 25,000 words in length.
9. The abstract may be the same, or based upon, the synopsis provided at the initial assessment phase, and should fit onto one page of A4.
10. The candidate must either be the sole author of the portfolio of published work or must be able to demonstrate in the critical review of the submitted work that they have made a major contribution to all of the work that has been produced by more than one author.   
      
    Where co-authored works are submitted, the candidate must provide a written statement, signed by the candidate and by one or more of the major contributory co-authors, specifying the candidate's individual contribution and the conditions and circumstances in which the work was carried out.  
      
    The candidate should have made a substantial direct academic contribution (i.e. intellectual responsibility and substantive work) and should also be able to defend the output as a whole.

On receiving the Application for Assessment, Registry will appoint examiners in accordance with the processes for other research degrees, as outlined in the ‘Guide to the Examination Process for Research Degrees’. Members of staff will require two external examiners.

Candidates will be required to submit themselves for an oral examination as specified in the ‘Guide to the Examination Process for Research Degrees’.

# Record of updates to the Code

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Section | Changes made | Date approved by RDC or QSC | Notes |
| Various | Change in terminology from Tier 4 Visa to Student Visa |  |  |
| 4.4.2-3 | Addition of a section on arrangements for when a supervisor leaves the University | 12/05/21 RDC |  |
| 6 | Attendance Monitoring for PGRs – incorporation of previous stand-alone document into the CoP |  |  |
| 8 | Annual reviews post-transfer period may be done as a paper-based review rather than review meeting | 12/05/21 RDC |  |
| 10 | Unsatisfactory Academic Progress Procedure – incorporation of previous stand-alone document into the CoP |  |  |
| 11 | Changes to examination arrangements for Masters by Research candidates (for those starting from 2021/22 academic year onwards) | 02/06/21 QSC |  |
| 4.1 | Removal of senior supervisor status | 01/12/21 QSC |  |
| 7.3.3 | Suspension of study for maternity, paternity, adoption and parental leave does not count towards maximum period of study. | 29/06/22 AB |  |
| 9.4.2 | Chair of transfer panel required to have either successful supervision of a doctoral PGR to completion or research degree examination experience. | 01/12/21 QSC |  |
| Various | New role of School PGR Lead |  |  |

1. Includes PhD by Distance Learning (further details in [Section 17](#_PhD_by_Distance)) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See [Section 18](#_PhD_by_Published) (PhD (by Published Work) for details of the programme of study [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See [Section 16](#_Professional_Doctorates_(see) (Professional Doctorates) for details of the programme of study [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. It is possible for the same individual to serve on the Transfer Assessment Panel and as the Internal Examiner in the final examination, but they should not be involved in the continued assessment and monitoring of the PGR’s work subsequent to the transfer assessment. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. In recommending the appointment of an External Assessor, Schools will be required to provide details of the current employment of the proposed assessor (the normal expectation is that they will be senior members of the academic staff of a UK HEI). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. When consideration is given to a recommendation to transfer to registration for a lower degree consideration must be given to the period of study remaining on the candidature. Registration for the degree of MPhil is 2 years full-time study followed by up to 1 year overtime (or 4 years part-time with up to 1 year overtime). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Exceptions might include cases such as disability. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)