



Academic Regulations for Research Awards – 2021/22

Note for Students

This edition of the Academic Regulations supersedes previous versions and applies to all research degree students of the University enrolling or re-enrolling onto the programmes of supervised research leading to the following degree awards:

Award	
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD); Master of Philosophy (MPhil);	
<i>The following Professional Doctorate programmes:</i>	
<i>In the Faculty of Arts, Design and Social Sciences:</i>	<i>In the Faculty of Business and Law:</i>
Doctor of Arts And Culture (DAC) Doctor Of Design (DDes) Doctor of Public Administration (DPA)	Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) Doctor of Business Leadership (DBL) Doctor of Law (DLaw)
<i>In the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences:</i>	
Doctor of Biomedical Sciences (DBMS) Doctor of Education (EdD) Doctor of Family Therapy (DFT) Doctor of Health Care (DHC) Doctor of Midwifery (DMW) Doctor of Nursing (D Nursing) Doctor of Occupational Psychology (DOccPsych)	Doctor of Occupational Therapy (DOccTher) Doctor of Physiotherapy (DPT) Doctor of Psychoanalytical Psychotherapy (DPP) Doctor of Public Health (DPubHealth) Doctor of Social Care (DSocCare) Doctor of Social Work (DSW) Doctor of Sport (DSport)
<i>In the Faculty of Engineering and Environment:</i>	
Doctor of Information Science (DInfoSci)	

The University's "Postgraduate Research (PGR) Code of Practice" sets the context for their implementation, and is available at <https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/research/postgraduate-research-degrees/>. There are separate regulations for the award of *PhD by Published Work* and for *Higher Doctorate* awards, both available at <https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/research/postgraduate-research-degrees/>.

Students are expected to be familiar with the Academic Regulations. If you have any difficulties in understanding the regulations you should consult your PGR Programme Leader, The Graduate School or your Supervisor. You may also seek independent advice and support from the Students' Union Advice & Representation Service (su.advice@northumbria.ac.uk). Procedures for students who wish to appeal against assessment decisions, or against the University withdrawing them for unsatisfactory progress, are defined in the [Handbook of Student Regulations](#).



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Notification of Log of Key Changes to Assessment Regulations

Substantive changes within this document (new paragraphs are in italicised bold and deletions are shown):

1. *The format of viva voce examinations can be online or in person*

Online viva voce examinations have been supported regularly by the Graduate School and running successfully since March 2020, with the presence of an Independent Chair. The arrangements have been well received by both students and examination teams and provide greater flexibility in timing and choice of examiners. Longer-term, a viva in person may be more appropriate, for reasons such as to maximise informal networking opportunities, to view an exhibition or performance relating to a practice-based PhD, or to accommodate reasonable adjustments for disability. The revised regulation identifies both online and in-person format examinations as appropriate formats as a norm, rather than either format being considered an exception:

10.2 Examinations may take place with attendees meeting either in person, online using video conferencing software, or via a combination of these options. The format will be agreed in advance at examiner appointment and arrangements subsequently confirmed by the Graduate School.

2. *Thesis submission at all stages will be in electronic (PDF) format only.*

Previously the pre-oral thesis was submitted as hard copy, with corrections/resubmissions either electronic or hard copy, and only the final thesis in electronic format. Over the last year, all theses have been submitted in electronic format. Costs for students submitting hard copies are avoided, electronic format is now commonly expected by examiners. By exception, external examiners can reclaim costs for printing a basic copy if necessary.

Appendix 1.1 iii) *The thesis or equivalent must be submitted to the Graduate School (including re-submissions), in electronic PDF format only. It will include a one-page Abstract of not more than 300 words of the written submission for the viva voce (oral) examination*

3. *Inclusion of the option to submit a Covid-19 impact statement with the thesis.*

Due to the impact of Covid-19, postgraduate research students are expected to adjust and adapt their research project to finish within the expected timescale where possible. This approach is aligned to [UKRI Policy](#) and subsequently the QAA have published advice relating to [Doctoral Standards for Research Students and Supervisors](#). The QAA advice clarifies that altering the outputs or changing the data used does not diminish the standard of doctoral education. Furthermore, the wider abilities doctoral students possess are as important as the output in assessing whether a student has met the national requirements for a PhD. In addition to abilities associated with the acquisition, interpretation and creation of knowledge, students who have demonstrated resilience and flexibility in dealing with challenges created by the pandemic, by progressively adjusting, adapting and otherwise refining their project, are likely to have displayed these wider abilities. Where students do take longer to complete due to the impact, this does not effect the outcome of their degree. It is proposed that a joint student / supervisor statement can be submitted with the thesis:



Appendix 1.1.ix) The impact of Covid-19 on Postgraduate Research programmes is significant for many students at various stages of their programme, resulting in an expectation that in many cases students will be expected to adjust and adapt their project to complete within the original timescale where possible, and with additional guidance relating to doctoral standards published by the QAA. The impact is likely to be relevant for several years, and therefore a joint student-supervisor impact statement (using the standard Graduate School form) may also be submitted with the thesis outlining the mitigations made, as additional information for examiners.

4. Inclusion of the option to submit an alternative format thesis incorporating sections suitable for publication

This format is identified as a possible alternative to a standard thesis. The format provides benefits by reducing time spent rewriting material from thesis chapters into publications (or vice versa) and enhances writing for publication skills. The format is a variant on the traditional format thesis and leads to the award of PhD, rather than a continental model PhD by Publication. It is also the result of research primarily conducted during registration, unlike the traditional UK model PhD by Publication, such as Northumbria University's [PhD by Published Work](#), which is submitted retrospectively to all publications during a shorter registration period. It must still constitute a body of publications within a coherent and continuous thesis, rather than a series of disconnected publications. In some disciplines the format may be encouraged amongst academic staff who are registered for PhD, to support their academic development:

2.2 The journal format thesis

The journal format thesis allows a postgraduate researcher to incorporate sections that are previously published, submitted for publication, or in a format suitable for submission for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. Apart from the inclusion of such materials, the thesis must conform to the same standards expected for a standard thesis. A significant proportion of the researched materials should be derived from original research undertaken after the date the student registered for PhD.

The student should use the introductory section of their thesis to explain and justify in full the nature and extent of their own contribution and the contribution of co-authors and other collaborators to the publications presented. The student should discuss the proposed format with their supervisory team before writing-up for submission. Prior to submission, the student will be asked to indicate the format of their thesis, during the examiner nomination process.



1 The Awards

1.1 The degree of PhD is awarded to a student who has:

- a) undertaken a piece of supervised research; critically investigated and evaluated an approved topic resulting in an independent and original contribution to knowledge and understanding (i.e. worthy of publication and peer review by the academic community);
- b) successfully completed training in, and demonstrated an understanding of research methods appropriate to the field;
- c) submitted the work for examination presented to a professional standard;
- d) defended the submission by viva voce (oral) examination to the satisfaction of the examiners.

1.2 The degree of MPhil is awarded to a student who has:

- a) undertaken a piece of supervised research;
- b) critically investigated and evaluated an approved topic;
- c) successfully completed training in, and demonstrated an understanding of research methods appropriate to the field;
- d) submitted the work for examination presented to a professional standard;
- e) defended the submission by viva voce (oral) examination to the satisfaction of the examiners.

1.3 The degrees relating to Professional Doctorate programmes are awarded to a student who has:

- a) undertaken a taught component (where required by the programme). Where this is the case, the Academic Regulations for Taught Awards apply to the taught component of the programme;
- b) undertaken a piece of supervised research;
- c) critically investigated and evaluated an approved topic resulting in an independent and original contribution to knowledge, understanding (i.e. worthy of publication and peer review by the academic community) and professional practice;
- d) successfully completed training in, and demonstrated an understanding of research methods appropriate to the field;
- e) submitted the work for examination presented to a professional standard;
- f) defended the submission by viva voce (oral) examination to the satisfaction of the examiners.

1.4 The award is made to students (also referred to as 'candidates') who have satisfied the requirements for the award and completion of the programme on the recommendation of the Examiners and is effective from the date upon which the relevant University Committee¹ approves the successful assessment.

Posthumous awards are permitted provided the examination criteria for the award can be deemed to have been satisfied.

¹ From September 2017 until further notice, this will be the Graduate School Committee.



2 Requirements for Admission and Registration

2.1 Successful applicants are admitted to the University for registration for a specified research programme at the discretion of the Pro-Vice Chancellor of the Faculty, or his/her nominee, provided:

- a) The applicant is adequately qualified. The minimum qualifications for entry are normally as follows:
 - i) For PhD an upper second class honours degree (UK) or equivalent, or a Masters degree at the appropriate level of demand, complexity, depth of study and learner autonomy, and in the relevant discipline.
 - ii) For a Professional Doctorate programme, a recognised first degree (which may be required to be subject specific), of at least upper second class honours standard, or the equivalent, and normally the equivalent of at least two years verifiable relevant practical experience of working in the field in a professional capacity, excluding any experience gained as part of the first degree studies.

Advanced Entry for a Professional Doctorate programme

Exemption can be given for 120-180 credits of the taught component on an Advanced Standing basis with a prior qualification (through RPL – Recognised Prior Learning) and/or existing experience (APEL - Accredited Prior Experiential Learning) providing they can be shown to satisfy the programme's learning outcomes at the required level.

- iii) For MPhil a second class honours degree (UK) or equivalent.
 - iv) Applicants who do not hold these qualifications must demonstrate equivalent intellectual competence possibly referenced by relevant experience to the satisfaction of the relevant University committee.
 - v) Where English is not the applicant's first language, a minimum International English Language Testing System (IELTS) score of 6.5 is required, with a minimum score of 6.0 in all components of the IELTS Academic Test normally required on entry.² However, a higher IELTS score may be required for particular disciplines, as specified by the relevant University body. If the development of the research is hindered by the student's competence in Academic English, or any other parts of the IELTS test, further evidence of ability to perform at the specified standard will be required to ensure continuation of the programme, particularly beyond the first twelve months.
- b) A working title of the proposed subject of study is submitted and the research programme is viable.
 - c) There is an undertaking by the University to provide adequate supervision, which is likely to be sustained.
 - d) The University/Faculty is able to provide appropriate facilities and other resources required to support the specified programme of study.
 - e) The conditions for enrolment including the payment of the fees are satisfied.

2.2 Students who have previously been withdrawn from a research degree by the University will not normally be readmitted in order to restart or resume a research degree.

² Pearson equivalence is as follows: score of 62 equates to IELTS 6.5; a score of 69 equates to IELTS 7.0

3 The Research Programme

- 3.1 Students are registered for the award on either a full or part time basis starting from the date the University formally admits the applicant to the programme and enrolls him/her as a registered student. Students will have access to the resources and facilities to support their programme to a level specified by the University on the basis of mode of study.
- a) A full-time student must devote a minimum of 37 hours per week for 44 weeks per year to the research activity.
 - b) A part-time student normally devotes a minimum of twenty hours per week for 44 weeks per year to the research activity.

Full-time or part-time study may be either based “On Campus”, or via “Blended Learning”:

On Campus: With the exception of reasonable time away for the purposes of research / data collection, full-time and part-time study will be based on campus. Where agreed upon admission, Home/EU students may be based off-campus within the UK.

Blended Learning: Programmes may also be available whereby students (regardless of location) will engage with the programme by a number of different methods, including face-to-face attendance (such as for induction, formal progression reviews and the viva voce examination), online tuition, and supervised research (via regular supervisory meetings by agreed methods of contact such as Skype).

- 3.2 The University supports the development of collaborative research degrees.

Joint Doctoral Programmes: A Joint Doctoral programme is a structured programme where all the elements of doctoral education are run jointly and the organisational structure and evaluation processes are managed on the basis of full integration of the partners. A Joint Doctoral Programme is characterised by an institutional level partnership agreement and, for each participating student, by an individual cotutelle agreement (regulates enrolment, supervision and the assessment of the doctoral degree thesis). Joint PhDs are jointly supervised throughout and require a minimum period of study of one year at each partner. Joint doctoral programmes lead to joint doctoral degrees (a single certificate or diploma), double doctoral degrees (2 diplomas) or multiple doctoral degrees (more than 2 diplomas).

Joint PhD agreements may only be developed as a part of wider agreements (developed on an institution to institution basis, involving a group of students over a longer period).

Dual Doctoral Degrees: A Dual PhD Degree (by Cotutelle) refers to the Joint supervision of a research student by supervisors at Northumbria and another HEIs and leads to the award of two doctoral degrees, attesting the successful completion of the requirements of the doctoral programme at Northumbria University and at the partner HEI. Dual PhDs are jointly supervised throughout and require a minimum period of study



of one year at each partner. Dual PhDs lead to the award of two separate PhDs (one from Northumbria, one from the Partner)

Dual PhD agreements may be individually developed (i.e. established on a one-to-one basis, via cotutelle agreements) with any appropriate University Partner or as a part of wider agreements (developed on an institution to institution basis, involving a group of students over a longer period).

- 3.3 A student registered for a research degree is required to undertake and complete the programme of research training under the guidance of the appointed supervisory team. The programme of training specified in the student's Professional Development and Research Training Plan³ will include generic skills training and supporting studies, and will be agreed as part of a Faculty's Approval of the Project.

PhD and MPhil Programmes

The initial outline of the programme (i.e. specified in the Project Approval document) must be submitted to the Faculty PGR Committee⁴ within four months of the student's start date for full-time students and six months for part-time students (and reviewed during the course of study). Earlier submission is permitted in either case. The programme is approved if the student demonstrates, to the satisfaction of the relevant Faculty PGR Committee Chair or delegated member, that there is a coherent programme which can be completed within the timescale at the level required of the award; and that the research training to be completed is appropriate and, to date, has been completed as specified. This stage also includes the consideration of the research ethics and governance requirements of the programme, with final approval being granted before the research has begun.

Project Approval is a 'progression' point for the student's research degree registration and a formal part of the registration process which the student must complete successfully. If a student does not satisfy the requirements for Project Approval, standard procedures apply to withdraw the student from the University for unsatisfactory academic performance (see Handbook of Student Regulations (PGR Students), Annexe 2).

The following outcomes are available to Faculty PGR Committees, when considering a student's application for Project Approval:

- a) The student's application for Project Approval is fully endorsed, his/her research degree registration process is successfully completed, and the proposed programme of research is approved.
- b) The student's Project Approval is not approved; the student may submit a second time. The Faculty PGR Committee will determine the timescale and deadline for the re-submission and notify this to the student in writing.
- c) Where the student's second application for Project Approval is not approved, the Faculty PGR Committee will notify the student, in writing, that his/her continued engagement with the research programme has been unsatisfactory; will set out the requirements that the student is required to meet to remedy the situation; and will determine the timescale and deadline by which the student is required to submit a third (and final) application for Project Approval.

³ An assessment of the student's individual plan for Professional Development and Research Training is to be completed within four months of a student's start date for both full-time and part-time students.

⁴ Faculty PGR Committees hold delegated authority from Graduate School Committee.



- d) Where a student fails to satisfy the criteria for Project Approval at the third attempt, a recommendation will be made to the Faculty PGR Committee to withdraw the student from the University for unsatisfactory academic performance. Once the recommendation to withdraw the student has been accepted, the Faculty PGR Committee will forward the recommendation to the Pro-Vice Chancellor of the Faculty for confirmation. The student will be notified of their withdrawal in writing.

Professional Doctorate Programmes

The combination of the initial research outline and (where applicable to the programme) taught advanced research bridging element are regarded as an equivalent to the standard postgraduate research Project Approval (PA). The PA equivalent assesses: the programme coherence, whether the programme can be complete in the timescale, the level required of the award and research training to be completed (including general skills training and supporting studies).

On completion of the research component, the student is assessed by an examination of the work through the submission of a thesis or portfolio (as determined by the requirements of the specific Professional Doctorate programme on which the student is enrolled) and by a viva voce (oral) examination. Where a portfolio is to be submitted for that assessment, the nature and indicative components of the student's portfolio must be specified, through the Faculty PGR Committee, when the student progresses to the research component. Specific guidance is available from individual Faculties.

- 3.4 Satisfactory progress must be made throughout the programme with regard to the required level of timely academic achievement; and progress will be monitored as follows:
- a) completion of Project Approval;
 - b) by the Principal Supervisor throughout the programme (including post-thesis submission and viva voce examination periods of correction/resubmission) in the normal course of supervision, via (as a minimum) 10 monthly meetings (full-time students) / 6 bi-monthly meetings (part-time students) with the student;⁵ formal supervision must be recorded using the University's on-line 'PGR Student Record System' by both the student and Principal Supervisor.
 - c) by successful completion of Annual Progression;
 - d) completion of thesis (or equivalent) submission, including any subsequent corrections or resubmission following the viva voce examination.

Continued registration of the student for the award is conditional upon the programme having approved status and upon satisfactory/timely progress being maintained by the student to meet University requirements for Annual Progression. If a student does not satisfy these requirements, standard procedures apply to withdraw the student from the

⁵ Where students are remotely located and face-to-face meetings are not possible, monthly 'contacts' will be conducted by other means (e.g. telephone).



University for failure at Annual Progression (or unsatisfactory academic performance, as determined by the Principal Supervisor).

- 3.5 The student must notify the relevant University Committee (Graduate School Committee) of the final title of the work three months before the end of the registration period, i.e. when the examiners are nominated.
- 3.6 Students are required at all times to carry out their studies under the general direction of the Supervisory team. The student and supervisors are required to maintain regular and frequent contact to ensure the programme of study progresses satisfactorily.
- 3.7 All registered students are required to enrol with the University and to pay the tuition fees due when requested.
- 3.8 A student's status is defined as enrolled (as a student and registered for a research programme), interrupted or withdrawn.
- 3.9 A student who is disabled is advised to consult the University's Disability and Dyslexia Support Team at an early stage of their research degree studies so that their individual needs can be assessed. See also regulation 8.5 following.

NOTE: The term 'disabled student' includes all those who fall within the definition of a disabled person set out in the Equality Act 2010: "A disabled person is someone who has a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial, adverse and long term effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities."

4 Duration of the Programme

- 4.1 The duration of the programme is defined as the period during which the student pursues the research to successful completion. All students are expected to submit for viva voce (oral) examination before the expiry of their standard duration date. Exceptionally, students may be given approval by the Faculty PGR Committee Chair or delegated member, to extend their period of study to the maximum duration date, and submit for viva voce (oral) examination before the expiry of their maximum duration.

The periods of standard and maximum duration are as follows:

	Full-Time	Part-Time
PhD	Active research: Years 1, 2 & 3	Active research: Years 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5
	Exceptional extension : Year 4	Exceptional extension: Year 6, 7
	Minimum duration: 2 years	Minimum duration: 4 years
	Standard duration: 3 years*	Standard duration: 5 years*
	Maximum duration: 4 years	Maximum duration: 7 years
MPhil	Active research: Years 1 & 2	Active research: Years 1, 2, 3
	Exceptional extension: Year 3	Exceptional extension: Year 4, 5
	Standard duration: 2 years*	Standard duration: 3 years*
	Maximum duration: 3 years	Maximum duration: 5 years
Professional Doctorate Programmes	APEL and/or taught component, and active research: Year 1	APEL and/or taught component, and active research: Year 1 & 2
	Research component: Year 2 & 3	Research component: Years 3,4 & 5
	Standard duration: 2-3 years *	Standard duration: 3-5 years*
	Exceptional extension: Year 4	Exceptional extension: Years 6 & 7

- 4.2 In exceptional circumstances (as approved by the Faculty PGR Committee) where students change their mode between full-time and part-time during the years of active research, the calculation of the duration will be adjusted pro-rata.
- 4.3 There is no minimum duration. However, submission earlier than three months before the standard duration date requires the approval of the relevant University Committee (Faculty PGR Committee).⁶

5 Progression and Assessment through the Programme

- 5.1 All students registered for research degrees are required to make satisfactory and timely progress throughout the programme and to meet the University requirements for Annual Progression [see regulation 5.2]. Full-time students must submit for Annual Progression each year. For part-time students this annual requirement is applied pro-rata (approximately biennially), with intermediate Supervisor Review meetings taking place

* Standard duration extends from start date until submission of the thesis, not until examination (Research Degrees Committee 24/05/2002). Once the formal viva voce (oral) examination has taken place, the duration of continued registration, determined by the requirements of the examination outcome, takes precedence over the candidate's standard and maximum duration dates.

⁶ Faculty PGR Committees hold delegated authority from the University's Graduate School Committee



in the intervening years, as part of the formal documented supervision meeting requirement.

- 5.2 The Supervisory team regularly monitors the student's progress and assesses whether timely academic achievement at the appropriate level is being demonstrated. Supervision includes both monitoring and assessing sustained progress throughout the programme in the course of routine supervision, and also contributing to the Annual Progression process according to the requirements set by the relevant Committee (Faculty PGR Committee). The Principal Supervisor and Student are required to have formal contact on a regular basis. As a minimum, this will include 10 meetings annually for full-time students and 6 meetings annually for part-time students. It is expected that any student difficulty in meeting the required level of timely academic achievement will normally be identified first in the context of supervision, and that appropriate informal warnings will be issued to the student and documented in that context (see also regulation 7.1 following). If a student does not satisfy the requirements, standard procedures apply to withdraw the student from the University for unsatisfactory academic performance (see Handbook of Student Regulations (PGR Students), Annexe 1 – sections 1.2 to 1.3).
- 5.3 Assessment at Annual Progression constitutes the key, formal progression points for research degree students, when the relevant Committee (Faculty PGR Committee) determines whether or not the programme may continue. Successful progression is dependent upon the Faculty PGR Committee confirming that the student has demonstrated, to the Sub-Committee's satisfaction, that the following criteria have been met:
- a) the programme has been conducted satisfactorily to date and all ethical considerations have been addressed;
 - b) timely progress has been made to date (and recorded at the student's monthly meeting with his/her Principal Supervisor, using the University's on-line 'PGR Student Record System') and the programme can be satisfactorily completed within the time available;
 - c) the programme meets the level required for the award;
 - d) (for doctoral students only) the programme is likely to lead to a contribution to knowledge or understanding;
 - e) the student's Professional Development and Research Training Plan specified at Project Approval is ongoing/has been completed satisfactorily to date.
- 5.4 Each Faculty publishes the process whereby students demonstrate the timely progression of knowledge and understanding relevant to the academic discipline; this publication includes a clear statement of the documentation which students are required to submit within the Faculty at Annual Progression. The scope, content and format may vary across Faculties, but in each case the Annual Progression process will entail:
- a) documentation or material submitted by the student to substantiate work completed in the year (Faculties variously specify what this documentation or material comprises), together with confirmation, via the University's on-line 'PGR Student Record System', that the student and Principal Supervisor have met monthly throughout the preceding year [see regulation 3.5 b) above] and the student's progress has been formally recorded;
 - b) a statement by the student of the key project deliverables indicating the research priorities for the next twelve-month period and/or to submission of the thesis or equivalent;
 - c) annual review of the student's Professional Development and Research Training Plan;



- d) annual review and confirmation of ethical scrutiny;
- e) direct engagement with the student in order to monitor the Annual Progression;
- f) independent review by two academic staff who are not part of the supervision team; the review panel provide a report to the Faculty PGR Committee of their assessment containing their recommendation (as per 5.5 below) to the Faculty PGR Committee. The report states the reasons underlying the recommendation and provides the evidence to substantiate their conclusion.

5.5 At each Annual Progression point, the student must satisfy the relevant committee (Faculty PGR Committee) that the published criteria have been met, in order for the programme to continue beyond each anniversary enrolment date. The recommendation of the Annual Progression Panel will be submitted to the Faculty PGR Committee for approval. Very exceptionally, the Committee may decide not to approve the Panel's recommendation – in such cases the Faculty PGR Committee should decide the appropriate action. The following outcomes are available to Faculty PGR Committees, when monitoring the quality of a student's submission for Annual Progression:

- a) The student's Annual Progression is approved; the student is permitted to continue on the research degree programme.
- b) The student's Annual Progression is not approved; the student may submit a second time. The Faculty PGR Committee will determine the timescale and deadline for the resubmission.
- c) (For PhD students only) The student's Annual Progression on the current programme is not approved and the student is required to register for a lower award.
- d) Fail. In the case of Professional Doctorate programmes, it is recommended that the student is awarded credits from the taught component modules(s), in accordance with the criteria and requirements of the Professional Doctorate degree programme⁷

NOTE: clauses c & d above are only applicable in the case of a second submission.

The Principles and Procedures for a student to appeal against the outcome of Annual Progression are published in the Handbook of Student Regulations (PGR Students), Annexe 2.

6 Circumstances Affecting Progress

6.1 Short-term extensions

A student may apply for an extension of up to 4 weeks to submit for Project Approval, Annual Progression or Thesis Submission if there are personal circumstances which are unforeseen and unpreventable and have a serious effect on the students' ability to submit by the appropriate deadline. Application for a short-term extension does not automatically mean it will be granted.

The student must submit an circumstances affecting progress form before the submission deadline. Appropriate medical certification, or other relevant evidence

⁷ Explicit guidance should be sought from the Graduate School in each individual case, because of differences dependent upon validation of specific programmes.

confirming the circumstances, must be provided. Guidance is available from the Graduate School Intranet Pages.

The Graduate School is responsible for the authorisation/rejection of a late submission.

6.2 Exceptional Circumstances

Throughout the programme, in the event that a postgraduate research student encounters any circumstance, for personal, technical or research-based reasons, which they, and potentially their supervisor, feel may affect their ability to perform as normal within assessments or for extensions longer than 4 weeks, the process for submitting a PGR 'circumstances affecting progress' form should be followed. The form documents the circumstances which it is felt affect the student's current progress on the research programme, and the adjustment requested, accompanied by supporting evidence (accompanied by evidence from the student or supervisor as appropriate). The student must have full knowledge of this form being submitted.

The form must be submitted in advance to the Graduate School, who will determine follow-up actions. In the case of an exceptional circumstance expected to impact upon an assessment deadline, the form must be submitted at the earliest opportunity and in advance of the assessment deadline. Where the exceptional circumstance related to performance in a face-to-face assessment at Project Approval, Annual Progression, or Viva Voce Examination, the form must be submitted within 10 working days following that assessment.

Guidance is available from the Graduate School Intranet Pages.

Possible outcomes are as follows:

- a) Students may be allowed an extension to deadlines (in excess of the short-term extension process).
- b) Students may be allowed to interrupt their studies (for a maximum of twelve months, in total, calculated across the entire period of the student's registration). (For part-time students, the maximum total period of interruption is calculated on a pro-rata basis). Once the student's period of interruption has ended, their registration is re-instated. Retrospective interruption is not permitted.
- c) Students may be allowed to change the conditions of their candidature relating to mode or programme. Student will not normally be permitted to change conditions of candidature relating to mode or programme beyond the end of their second annual progression point (or part time pro-rata equivalent). No change of candidature relating to mode or programme is allowed beyond Standard Duration or any of the subsequent thesis submission / examination / correction phases.
- d) Exceptionally, students may be given approval to extend their period of study to the maximum duration date, and submit for viva voce (oral) examination before the expiry of their maximum duration.
- e) Students may be allowed to re-register for the research degree for a period of twelve months, where, extraordinarily, additional time is required to complete the programme. In seeking re-registration, the student must be able to provide sufficient evidence to the relevant Committee (PGR Circumstances Committee) that he/she is still a suitable student; that the research is still current and appropriate; and can be completed and submitted for viva voce (oral) examination within the extra twelve months if re-registration is permitted. Only one re-registration is permitted.

f) In the event of an exceptional circumstance impacting upon performance in a face-to-face assessment at Project Approval, Annual Progression or Viva Voce Examination, a re-assessment (further panel meeting or examination as appropriate) or amendment to the approved outcome may be permitted.

6.3 Maternity / Paternity / Adoption leave

Details of arrangements are published in the PGR Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Leave Policy at the Graduate School Intranet Pages and eLearning Portal Graduate School Organisation.

7 Supervision of the Programme

7.1 The University will provide an appropriate and qualified supervision team with the relevant subject expertise. A student will have at least two, but not normally more than three supervisors.

A permanent member of staff will be appointed to the team and will be designated as the Principal Supervisor. The student and Principal Supervisor will meet (or make contact) on a regular basis and will maintain a formal record of each meeting. As a minimum, this will be 10 times per year annually for full-time students, and 6 times per year annually for part-time students. The Principal Supervisor has responsibility for the overall management and quality assurance of the student's supervision; for monitoring timely student progress towards the academic level required of the award; and for feeding back to the student both formally and informally his/her assessment of student performance. The requirement for contact between Principal Supervisor and student enables close monitoring and feedback on the student's progress to be maintained (see regulation 5.2 previously). Routinely at those meetings, the Principal Supervisor should discuss with the student the level required for the research degree award and comment on whether (in the Supervisor's academic judgement) the student's engagement with the research programme is at the right level and that progress is timely. This makes it possible to address any difficulties at an early stage.

7.2 Where the Principal Supervisor is to be absent from the University for more than one month (e.g. through illness), it is the responsibility of the supervision team to notify the relevant Faculty PGR Committee who will make arrangements for another member of the student's supervision team to take over the role and responsibilities of Principal Supervisor until such time as the original Principal Supervisor returns to the University.

7.3 Satisfactory progress must be made throughout the programme with regard to the required level of timely academic achievement. The Principal Supervisor monitors satisfactory and timely progress throughout the programme in the normal course of supervision, via formal meetings with the student. Where the Principal Supervisor judges that this is not being achieved, the procedures described in the *Handbook of Student Regulations (Research), Annex 1: Failure to Demonstrate Satisfactory*



Academic Performance, available at
https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/vc/leservteam/stud_reg_handbk/research/ apply.

- 7.4 The relevant Committee (Faculty PGR Committee) approves a proposal for change in supervision arrangements.
- 7.5 The supervision team must have both subject and practice expertise, sufficient to advise the candidate throughout the period on the planning and execution of professional practice which has depth and complexity appropriate to the degree.
- 7.6 Collaboration with professional colleagues and the profession in the course of the studies and the preparation of the research submission (thesis or equivalent) is encouraged.

8 Viva Voce Examination of the Research

- 8.1 On completion of the research programme, the candidate is assessed by an examination of the work (the submitted thesis or equivalent) and by a viva voce (oral) examination.
- 8.2 Both the form of the research submission (see Appendix 1 - Instructions to Students for the Submission of the Research Programme for Viva Voce (oral) Examination) and the method of examination are specified at Annual Progression one year before standard duration expires (pro-rata for part-time students). With regard to the appointment of the student's Examiners, the relevant Faculty Committee (Faculty PGR Committee) will consider and then approve and appoint the Examiner (see also regulation 9.5 following).
- 8.3 The student takes no part in the nomination of the examiners and must have no formal contact with any appointed examiner before the viva voce (oral) examination.
- 8.4 All students are expected to submit for viva voce (oral) examination before the expiry of their standard duration date (see Section 4.1).
- 8.5 In the case of a Professional Doctorate or Practice-based PhD, the tone of the viva voce (oral) examination will allow full expression to the professional dimension of the work. All students are expected to submit for viva voce (oral) examination before the expiry of their standard duration date (see Section 4.1).

The examiners will assess whether the student has undertaken research, critical investigation and evaluation of an approved topic in the professional area of work, produced a submission which successfully articulates the findings, and will judge whether the work is an original contribution to knowledge and professional practice in the field. Students will be expected to have demonstrated their ability to integrate rigorous academic/critical analysis with practical relevance and application, to translate ideas into a form understandable by and meaningful to the profession, and to communicate and disseminate ideas to fellow professionals to stimulate developments of good practice, and to further research into and enhance the profession generally.

- 8.6 In the case of a student who is disabled [see note at regulation 3.10], 'reasonable adjustments' to the arrangements for the oral examination will be made, where necessary, to support the disabled student during the viva. Those adjustments will be

discussed with the student on an individual basis in advance of the arrangements for the oral examination being finalised. However, the onus lies with the student to disclose their disability to the Graduate School before the date for the oral examination is agreed, so that the student's individual requirements can be discussed and reasonable adjustments put in place, and notified to the examination team, before the arrangements for the examination are confirmed.

9 Appointment of the Viva Voce Examiners

- 9.1 Assessment is undertaken by (at least) two independent examiners, one of whom must be external to the University.
- 9.2 The appointed examiners approved by the relevant University Committee (Faculty PGR Committee) must satisfy all of the following criteria:
- a) Each examiner (internal and external) is experienced in research in the general area of a student's submission and has experience as a specialist in the area(s) to be examined. In order to ensure that these points are met, the student is required to submit to the Principal Supervisor an abstract of the thesis of approximately 300 words before the examiners are nominated.
 - b) The viva voce (oral) examination team as a whole has substantial experience (i.e. three or more previous examinations) of examining research degree students at the level being examined or above. At least one member of the examination team must have a minimum of one examination experience, at the level being examined or above, in the UK.
 - c) The examiners must be independent. Independence means that the:
 - i) examiners (internal and external) have not previously acted as a member of the student's supervision team
 - ii) external examiner/s are not appointed so frequently⁸ that familiarity with the University might prejudice objective judgment;
 - iii) external examiners have not normally been engaged in the capacity of supervisor to another student within the University during the previous five years;
 - iv) external examiners have not been employed by the University as a member of staff or as a consultant to the University during the previous three years;
 - v) examiners (internal and external) must confirm before appointment, that they have no informal/personal connection with the student, which might prejudice the independence

⁸ An external examiner cannot be appointed more than three times in five years



of the examination. Co-authorship or other forms of collaboration between the student's supervisor and Examiners are not evidence against the independence of the examiners.

- 9.3 A person registered for a research degree will not normally be appointed to act as an examiner.
- 9.4 If the student has a permanent contract of employment with Northumbria University (or the collaborating establishment) or has been in continuous employment with the University in excess of three years, the examination team will consist of two external examiners.
- 9.5 Examiners, satisfying regulation 9.2 above, are proposed by the relevant Supervisor and submitted to the relevant Faculty Committee (Faculty PGR Committee) to be considered for approval three months before the end of the active period of research. An examination is void if the examiners have not been appointed in accordance with the regulations and approved by the relevant University Committee (Faculty PGR Committee). If the relevant Committee (Faculty PGR Committee) decides that the proposed examiners should not be appointed, then the proposal is returned to the Principal Supervisor for reconsideration and fresh nomination as appropriate.
- 9.6 Each viva voce (oral) examination shall have a Chair, whose responsibilities are to facilitate a professional and authoritative setting for the examination, and to ensure that the assessment process is conducted rigorously, equitably, appropriately, fairly and consistently, according to the University's regulations and procedures. The Chair will advise the examiners on the University's research degree regulations, procedures, policy and practice.

The Internal Examiner will act as Chair, except in the circumstances identified in 9.7

- 9.7 An Independent 'non-examining' Chair, will be appointed:
- a) for an internal examiner's first doctoral examination;
 - b) where the external has no previous UK doctoral exam experience;
 - c) where the internal holds an emeritus/honorary appointment;
 - d) where there is no internal examiner;
 - e) in special circumstances such as an inexperienced team (fewer than six previous doctoral examinations);
 - f) in the event of a further viva (relating to resubmission or following an appeal to the outcome of the first viva);
 - g) where the viva is conducted off-campus (by video conference);
 - h) where the Faculty Postgraduate Research Director considers that the presence of an experienced academic would assist in ensuring that the examination is fair and conducted in accordance with the University's regulations for the award being examined.
- 9.8 Where an Independent 'non-examining' Chair shall be appointed (according to 9.7), appointment will be by the relevant University Committee (Faculty PGR Committee) when the examiners are appointed, and must satisfy the following criteria:



- a) Is a current member of the University's academic staff;
- b) Has successfully supervised to completion at least one research degree candidate (PhD or Professional Doctorate);
- c) Has experience of examining for, or has attended as supervisor, the degree being examined;
- d) Is independent. Independence means that the Independent Chair:
 - i) has not previously acted as a member of the candidate 's supervision team
 - ii) confirms before appointment that they have no informal/personal connection with the candidate, and no conflict of interest, which might prejudice the independence of the examination.

10 Conduct of the Viva Voce Examination

- 10.1 The viva voce (oral) examination should normally take place within three months of the candidate handing in the submission, or exceptionally in the event that the submission is made before the appointment of examiners, within three months of examiner appointment.
- 10.2 Examinations may take place with attendees meeting either in person, online using video conferencing software, or via a combination of these options. The format will be agreed in advance at examiner appointment and arrangements subsequently confirmed by the Graduate School.
- 10.3 One member of the supervision team (normally the Principal Supervisor) may attend the viva voce (oral) examination, at the request of the candidate, as an observer only. A written request from the candidate for attendance by the Supervisor must be made in advance of the examination date. The request is normally made (on a standard form available from the Graduate School) when the Thesis is submitted. The examination team will be informed if the Supervisor is to attend. The Supervisor must withdraw from

the examination with the candidate prior to the deliberations of the examiners on the outcome of the examination.⁹

- 10.4 At the conclusion of the viva voce (oral) examination, the examiners provide a full written report of the examination which contains their recommendation, which will be one of the following:
- a) Award the degree.¹⁰
 - b) Award the degree, subject to modifications being carried out to the satisfaction of the nominated examiner/s.¹¹
 - c) Require a re-submission for the degree, including a further viva voce (oral) examination, and with the work re-submitted within a maximum period of twelve months from the date of the first examination.
 - d) In the case of a PhD examination, recommend the award of a lower degree, with or without further amendment to the thesis, in accordance with the criteria and requirements of that lower degree.
 - e) Fail.

NOTE: In the case of a second examination following re-submission, the Examiners cannot recommend clause c) above.

- 10.5 The examiners' report states, in detail, the reasons underlying the recommendation and provides the evidence to substantiate their conclusion; and, where appropriate, lists the alterations and/or additions required to the work. The report is normally word-processed and always completed, in full, immediately after the viva voce (oral) examination has concluded, i.e. on the same day.
- 10.6 The examiners' recommendation is submitted to the relevant University Committee (Graduate School Committee) for approval. Very exceptionally, the Committee may decide not to approve the examiners' recommendation (e.g. where the examiners' recommendations are at variance with the content of their report or contrary to the

⁹ Regulation approved by Academic Board on 14 November 2001

¹⁰ Examiners may recommend this outcome, i.e. *Award the degree*, despite typographical/spelling or minor textual corrections being needed, provided that the Examiners do not wish to review any of these corrections after the Candidate has made them.

¹¹ "Modifications" may include revision of material in the thesis that the Examiners specify in detail and which, in their judgement, are necessary for the thesis to reach an acceptable standard. This can include revisions that rectify omissions as well as improvements to the contextualisation/arguments/discussions within the thesis, and removal of sections/other re-structuring of the thesis. The award of the degree is withheld until the Examiners confirm that all requested modifications have been completed to their satisfaction.



University's regulations or inconsistent). In such cases, the Committee should determine the appropriate action.

- 10.7 If a consensus to make an award is not possible, the examiners provide separate reports which should clearly indicate the examiners' individual recommendations and the reasons for these. The Graduate School Committee may then appoint new examiners.
- 10.8 Normally only one viva voce (oral) re-examination is permitted.
- 10.9 The relevant University Committee (Graduate School Committee) will, in each case, determine the timescale and deadline for the amendments required by the examiners, taking into account the scale of the amendments required.
- 10.10 Any request to extend the deadline for submission of a corrected thesis or equivalent (or a re-submission) must be made, in writing, by the candidate to the relevant University Committee (Graduate School Committee). The request must be made in advance of the examiners' deadline, stating the reasons(s) for the request and the duration of the required extension.

11 Deposit, Discovery and Access Copyright

- 11.1 Following successful viva voce examination, a digital copy is placed with the University Library (via the Graduate School) for upload to the 'Northumbria Research Link', the University's institutional repository for research outputs, in order to make the full text submission in the public domain.
- 11.2 For thesis the University Library will provide resources description metadata for the submission. This metadata will enable scholarly discovery of the submission in the Library catalogue and will also be made available to national and international external search services, including but not limited to the national theses repository Electronic Thesis Online Service (EThOS), DART Europe E-theses Portal and Google Scholar. Arrangements for confidentiality of submissions (normally made at the start of the programme or on request at appointment of examiners) are approved by the relevant University committee (Graduate School Committee) and are normally limited to a maximum of two years. The arrangements for confidentiality of the submission must be made and approved before the viva voce (oral) team is appointed. Once a two-year period of restriction has expired, if the restriction needs to continue it is the candidate's responsibility to initiate a request to the Graduate School Committee (via the Graduate School) for the confidentiality to be extended for a further period of two years.
- 11.3 Responsibility for securing third party copyright permissions, in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act (1998), for material including in their submission rests with the candidate.

12 Appeals against the outcome of the Viva Voce Examination

- 12.1 The principles and procedures for candidates to appeal against the outcome of a research degree viva voce examination are published in the Handbook of Student Regulations (PGR Students), Annexe 3.



Appendix 1: Submission of the research programme for viva voce examination

Before beginning the preparation of their submission (Thesis or equivalent), all students should consult the document *Submitting for Examination – Guidance for Research Degree Students and Supervisors*, which sets out the University's requirements on Thesis presentation. The document is available on the Graduate School Intranet Pages and eLearning Portal Graduate School Organisation.

1. Submission of the thesis

- i) The student is responsible for submitting the final thesis or equivalent for the assessment of the award. The work must be presented to an excellent standard of presentation. Details of the format and style of presentation are issued separately¹². The student must ensure that the format and standard of submission fully meet the requirements of the University's regulations.
- ii) The student is responsible for ensuring that the work acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others; and does not incorporate, without acknowledgment, material derived from the work (published or unpublished) of another individual. This should be confirmed, before submission, by the student using Turnitin software, and consulting the Principal Supervisor on the interpretation of the resulting report.
- iii) The thesis or equivalent must be submitted to the Graduate School (including re-submissions), in electronic PDF format only. It will include a one-page Abstract of not more than 300 words of the written submission for the viva voce (oral) examination.
- iv) The viva voce (oral) examination should normally take place within three months of the candidate handing in the submission, or approval of the examination team where this is not in place already. An electronic copy of the full thesis or equivalent in PDF format must also be submitted – see section 1 vii) below.
- v) A declaration that the work has not been submitted for any other award, except that entailed by research training as declared when the project was initially approved; that states the number of words contained in the submission and that states it is the work of the student alone, must be included¹³. The latter should include evidence that the work acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others; and does not incorporate, without acknowledgment, material derived from the work (published or unpublished) of another individual.¹⁴ Where appropriate, this declaration will specify the relationship of the submission to any wider project or collaborative project. The Declaration should be signed and dated. Guidance on the specific wording required for this Declaration is contained in the Graduate School document *Submitting for Examination: Guidance for Research Degrees Students and Supervisors* (Annexe A - Requirements for Presentation of Master of Philosophy or Doctor of Philosophy, and

¹² See the document *Submitting for Examination – Guidance for Research Degree Students and Supervisors* on the Graduate School Intranet Pages.

¹³ The word length of the submission excludes bibliography (academic references), footnotes and appendices.

¹⁴ For example, evidence from use of *Turnitin* software – available from the University's 'Blackboard' electronic learning portal



Annex B - Requirements for Presentation of a Professional Doctorate Thesis or Portfolio)¹⁵.

- vi) A copyright declaration must also be submitted with the Thesis or equivalent. The declaration form will be provided separately by the Graduate School.
- vii) The student should also provide, with the submission of the thesis or equivalent, a list of any material which he/she may have published (alone or jointly), to enable the examiners to be fully informed of the contribution to knowledge actually made by the submission.
- viii) Arrangements for the confidentiality (e.g. due to commercial sensitivity) of the work must be specified before the Examination Team is appointed (normally three months before the submission is due).
- ix) The impact of Covid-19 on Postgraduate Research programmes is significant for many students at various stages of their programme, resulting in an expectation that in many cases students will be expected to adjust and adapt their project to complete within the original timescale where possible, and with additional guidance relating to doctoral standards published by the QAA¹⁶. The impact is likely to be relevant for several years, and therefore a joint student-supervisor impact statement (using the standard Graduate School form) may also be submitted with the thesis outlining the mitigations made, as additional information for examiners.
- x) The submission of the thesis or equivalent for viva voce (oral) examination is at the sole discretion of the student.¹⁷ It would be unwise for the student to submit their thesis or equivalent against the advice of the supervision team, but they do have the right to do so. The student should also not assume that a supervisor's agreement to the submission of their thesis or equivalent guarantees the award of the degree.

¹⁵ See the document *Submitting for Examination – Guidance for Research Degree Students and Supervisors* on the Graduate School Intranet Pages.

¹⁶ See <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/guidance/advice-on-doctoral-standards-for-research-students-and-supervisors.pdf>

¹⁷ However early submission requires the approval of the relevant University committee (Faculty PGR Committee).



2. Format of the submission

The form of the submission will normally be one of the following:

2.1 The Thesis

The standard submission comprises a written thesis with an indicative word length as follows:

Subject Area	Indicative word length		
	<i>PhD</i>	<i>MPhil</i>	<i>Professional Doctorate</i>
In sciences and engineering	35,000 – 45,000	17,500 – 22,500	25,000 – 32,500
In discursive subject areas such as humanities and social sciences	75,000 – 85,000	37,500 – 42,500	55,000 – 60,000
Creative Arts (Practice-led research including subjects centred in the Creative Writing field, etc)	30,000 – 40,000	15,000 – 20,000	20,000 – 30,000

Reprints of the students own published material may be included within the thesis or as an appendix, appropriately referenced.

2.2 The journal format thesis

The journal format thesis allows a postgraduate researcher to incorporate sections that are previously published, submitted for publication, or in a format suitable for submission for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. Apart from the inclusion of such materials, the thesis must conform to the same standards expected for a standard thesis. A significant proportion of the researched materials should be derived from original research undertaken after the date the student registered for PhD.

The student should use the introductory section of their thesis to explain and justify in full the nature and extent of their own contribution and the contribution of co-authors and other collaborators to the publications presented. The student should discuss the proposed format with their supervisory team before writing-up for submission. Prior to submission, the student will be asked to indicate the format of their thesis, during the examiner nomination process.

2.3 Non-standard equivalents to a thesis

Where a non-standard equivalent to a thesis such as a portfolio is submitted (this option normally applies to Professional Doctorate programmes only), rather than a Thesis, the following is relevant:

The nature and indicative components of a submission must be specified at the outset as part of the approval process through the Faculty PGR Committee, such as to enable the candidate to demonstrate (at the final examination) that the learning outcomes have been met. Specific guidance is available from individual Faculties.

The submission will always contain a critical commentary of between 15,000 – 20,000 words (depending on the requirements of the specific programme on which the student is enrolled). The critical commentary sets the material in a theoretical and professional context; elaborates the overriding line of argument, discussion of the research philosophies, methodology and evidence of data collection which are included in the

portfolio; and demonstrates the original contribution made by the portfolio to theory and (in the case of Professional Doctorate programmes) professional practice.

It is expected that the majority of the material in the submission (at least two-thirds) will encompass the prospective nature of the research programme; the remainder will contain retrospective material.

Examples of evidence (though not exclusive) which could be included within the submission, are:

- Published journal and conference papers, book chapters or books
- Strategic Organisational Reports
- Strategic Policy Documents
- Evaluation Reports
- Web work
- Videos of practice interventions
- Innovative methods of developing professional practice
- Feedback on interventions, developments and professional practice
- Student's own self-development evidence, contributions and reflections on professional practice
- Reflective diary extracts

Further advice is available from the relevant Committees.¹⁸

- 2.4** For a submission (thesis or equivalent) over the maximum words indicated, the student must obtain prior approval for submission, from the relevant University Committee (Graduate School Committee), explaining the outlining reason.

The final submission (thesis or equivalent) will be submitted as one copy in PDF format.¹⁹

¹⁸ Faculty PGR Committee or Graduate School Committee.

¹⁹ See University requirements on presentation and binding of theses at *Submitting for Examination – Guidance for Research Degree Students and Supervisors* on the Graduate School Intranet Pages.