

York Graduate Research School

Policy on Research Degrees

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Policy on Research Degrees (formerly the Code of Practice on Research Degrees) sets out University policy on research degree programmes for research students, supervisors of research students and members of Thesis Advisory Panels, examiners of research degrees, and other University staff with responsibility for research students.
- 1.2 This Policy has been drawn up with reference to the *Chapter B11: Research degrees* of the QAA's *UK Quality Code for Higher Education* (2012). York Graduate Research School (YGRS), reporting to Senate, is responsible for implementing the PoRD and reviewing it on an annual basis.
- 1.3 This Policy supplements, but does not supersede, the University's regulations for research degree awards (Regulation 2: www.york.ac.uk/about/organisation/governance/governance-documents/ordinances-and-regulations/regulation-2/).
- 1.4 This Policy applies to the degrees of PhD (including three-year, four-year and distance learning variants), EngD and MPhil, and MA/MSc by research (the MA (by research) and MSc (by research)). The PhD by Publication is detailed in University's regulations (Regulation 2.9). Therefore, this policy refers to all research students unless otherwise stated. Additional regulations applying only to the PhD by distance learning are in Appendix 3.

Responsibility for research students and research degree programmes

Institutional responsibility

- 1.5 YGRS and University Research Committee are responsible for maintaining an oversight of strategic policy relating to research degree students and programmes.
- 1.6 YGRS is responsible, at institutional level, for the quality assurance and enhancement of the research student experience and of research degree programmes, including the approval of new research degree programmes.
- 1.7 YGRS monitors research degree students and research degree programmes through:
 - (i) the consideration of a range of statistical data on an annual basis (analysed by department and taking into relevant variation such as the mode of study, requirements of funding bodies etc.) including:
 - Postgraduate Research Student Experience (PRES) survey data (when available)
 - rates of annual progression at the first and second attempt (from the Research Student Administration Team)
 - submission and completion times and rates (from the Research Student Administration Team)
 - pass, referral, fail and withdrawal rates (from the Research Student Administration Team)
 - appeals and complaints (from Special Cases Committee)

(ii) University Teaching Committee's (UTC) annual programme review and periodic review processes, which include explicit consideration of research students and research degree programmes.

1.8 Operational *institutional* responsibility for research students and research degree programmes is as follows:

Area	Office
Admissions	Student Admissions and Recruitment
Supporting the research student journey from enrolment through annual progression to final examination	The Research Student Administration Team (RSAT)
Research degree programme approval, monitoring and review	Academic Support Office (ASO) (plus the Planning Office for consideration of new programme proposals and major modifications)
Research student induction and training, including for Postgraduates Who Teach	Research Excellence Training Team (RETT)
Research policy framework	Research Strategy and Policy Office (RSPO)
Research ethics	University Ethics Committee and its disciplinary sub-committees
Training for supervisors	Research Excellence Training Team (RETT)

Departmental responsibility

1.9 Within a department or centre, the departmental research committee has oversight of all research in the department, while responsibility for research students and research degree programmes rests with the Board of Studies, although in many departments responsibility is delegated from the Board of Studies to a Graduate School Board (or equivalent). In the rest of the document, 'department' is used to represent a student's home department or centre, and Graduate School Board is used to represent whichever departmental committee has formal responsibility (either directly or under delegated powers) for research students and research degree programmes.

Centres for Doctoral Training and Doctoral Training Partnerships

1.10 The University participates in a number of Centres for Doctoral Training (CDTs) and Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTPs). CDTs and DTPs are Research-Council funded consortia of universities and research institutions which provide enhanced research degree programmes by pooling the expertise of the partners. Students undertaking a research degree within a CDT or DTP will receive their award from their home institution but are entitled and/or required to undertake taught elements and other training and networking opportunities across the partnership. To facilitate the operation of a CDT or DTP, decisions (for example relating to student selection, induction and training) normally taken by individual institutions (normally at departmental level at York) may be taken at CDT or DTP level by a body comprising representatives from all the partners. Approval for research degree programmes operating through CDTs or DTPs, including any special features and/or exceptions to the University's Policy on Research Degrees) must be obtained from YGRSB. Relevant student data may be shared with appropriate partner institutions. Students undertaking a research degree within a CDT or DTP

need to comply with all relevant conditions of Research Council funders, including data-sharing, open access, Gateway to Research and annual Researchfish submission, as a condition of their studentship.

Approval of research degree programmes

- 1.11 All new research degree programmes require the approval of the departmental Graduate School Board, Planning Committee and the Graduate Research School Board (YGRSB).
- 1.12 Where a department is planning to bid for a CDT or DTP (as lead or member institution), the University approval stage (i.e. Planning and YGRSB) for the associated research degree programme should run in parallel with the initial drafting of the bid in order to identify and address any issues early on in the process and build up staff expertise and cooperation.
- 1.13 The Chair of YGRSB may decide that comments from an external assessor on a new research degree programme are not required, e.g. if the programme has already undergone external review as part of a bid to a research council or other sponsor/funding body.
- 1.14 Modifications to research degree programmes require departmental approval and, in the case of major modifications (including significant changes to departmental training requirements), the approval of YGRSB and sometimes Planning Committee.
- 1.15 Any credit-bearing modules created specifically for a research degree programmes (i.e. not part of existing taught master's programmes) require departmental approval (and may require YGRSB approval). Such modules need to be presented on the usual module forms and the department will need to ensure that they will be overseen by a taught external examiner.
- 1.16 Approval for taught early exit awards (awarded to students who have successfully completed credit-bearing modules but who withdraw, have their enrolment terminated, or are not awarded a research degree following examination) or, more exceptionally, taught interim awards (awarded to students who have successfully completed credit-bearing modules whilst still registered for their research degree) must be sought from YGRSB. The modules comprising the award should form a coherent whole. A programme specification must be provided for each award and the standard taught postgraduate assessment rules should apply.

Four-year PhD programmes

- 1.17 Departments can propose to Planning Committee and YGRSB for consideration and approval four-year PhD programmes (and part-time equivalents), in addition to their existing three-year PhD programme(s). Students may be admitted to a four-year PhD programme only if the programme has the necessary approval.
- 1.18 A four-year PhD programme is distinct from a 1+3 programme (a masters year followed by a separate three-year PhD programme) in that students are enrolled on a research degree programme from the outset (and are expected to engage with their substantive research project from the start). A four-year PhD programme must be qualitatively distinct from a three-year PhD programme and to this end must contain at least *six months of activities and material* that is not in the three-year PhD programme. These distinctive elements can be spread over the four years and departments must provide a full programme for students in the fourth year.

1.19 A four-year PhD programme must have a title that distinguishes it from the equivalent three-year PhD programme (where this exists) e.g. 'PhD in X with foundation phase/with integrated studies/four-year route' and which indicates the longer duration and/or specialist nature of the programme. It is necessary for four-year PhD programmes to be clearly identifiable for logistical reasons e.g. to support applications for visas. Departments may, however, make the case that students should exit with a qualification that does not make reference to a longer duration (e.g. 'PhD in X') where this is academically appropriate.

2. The criteria for the award of research degrees

2.1 The degrees of PhD, EngD, MPhil and MA/MSc by research are all obtained by research and are assessed through the submission of a thesis (or equivalent) and, in the majority of cases, an oral examination.

2.2 The degrees of PhD and EngD are doctoral degrees (level 8 of *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), third cycle qualifications within *The Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area* (FQ-EHEA)).

2.3 The degrees of MPhil and MA/MSc by research are master's degrees (level 7 of the FHEQ, second cycle qualifications with the FQ-EHEA).

2.4 A thesis will be a piece of work which a capable, well-qualified and diligent student, who is properly supported and supervised, can complete successfully within the normal period of enrolment for the degree in question.

The descriptor for the award of the degrees of PhD and EngD

2.5 The degrees of PhD or EngD are awarded to students who have demonstrated all of the following:

- the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication;
- systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice;
- the general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems;
- a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences;
- continue to undertake pure and/or applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas or approaches;

and will have:

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent environments.

2.6 A PhD or EngD thesis (or equivalent) must contain a substantial original contribution to knowledge or understanding.

The descriptor for the award of the degrees of MPhil and MA/MSc by research

2.7 The degrees of MPhil and MA/MSc by research are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

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

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences;
- demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level;
- continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level;

and will have:

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:
 - the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility;
 - decision-making in complex and unpredictable situations; and
 - the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.

2.8 The MPhil is a degree of considerable distinction in its own right and an MPhil thesis (or equivalent) is expected to display a good general knowledge of the field of study, a comprehensive knowledge of some part or aspect of the field of study, and a recognisable original contribution to knowledge or understanding.

2.9 An MA/MSc by research programme is shorter than an MPhil programme (one year full-time as opposed to two years full-time) and consequently, an MA/MSc by research thesis (or equivalent) will be narrower in scope than an MPhil thesis, although it should still contain some original work

3. The research environment

3.1 The University of York is a leading research-intensive institution, with national and international recognition, and an excellent track record in successive Research Assessment Exercises (RAEs) (now termed the Research Excellence Framework). The University aims to build on its previous success through its Research Strategy, which is overseen by the University's Research Committee.

3.2 The University is committed to the highest standards of research integrity within its research community, maintained with reference to a framework of University policies (including the Code of practice on ethics (www.york.ac.uk/staff/research/governance/policies/ethics-code), the Code of practice on research integrity (www.york.ac.uk/staff/research/governance/policies/research-code/) and the Policy on research data management (www.york.ac.uk/about/departments/support-and-admin/information-directorate/information-policy/index/research-data-management-policy/) as well as legal and funder frameworks.

3.3 Research students are provided with an appropriate research environment, that is: (i) where excellent research, recognised by the relevant subject community, is occurring and, (ii) where appropriate support is provided for engaging in, and learning about, research.

3.4 The University assures itself that departments are providing an appropriate research environment by: (i) YGRSB's consideration of annual programme reviews and research reports from departments, and, (ii) monitoring, by YGRSB, of the research student experience. The University will take action to address any identified weaknesses.

3.5 A department, through its Graduate School Board, should assure itself that it can provide an appropriate research environment by considering whether for an individual research student:

- appropriate supervision of the proposed research topic can be provided by existing members of staff
- there are sufficient numbers of research students and high calibre research-active staff in the student's chosen field and related areas
- there is an active, collegial research community to support the student, for example in terms of the provision of regular research seminars etc.
- the necessary facilities and training etc. to support the student can be provided.

Facilities and resources

3.6 Departments (working in conjunction with the relevant central services, e.g. the Information Directorate, Humanities Research Centre and Research Centre for Social Sciences) are responsible for ensuring that research students have the facilities and resources they need to pursue their approved research. Guidance on the facilities and resources provided should be included in the department's handbook for research degree students. Departments are also responsible for ensuring

that students undertaking work away from the University (e.g. fieldwork and research visits) have the facilities and resources they need.

3.7 Facilities and resources should normally include: (i) access to photocopying, and printing, (ii) library resources (including training and relevant electronic resources), (iii) appropriate computing provision for their research project (hardware, software, training and support), (iv) where relevant (e.g. for laboratory-based subjects), access to specialist facilities and materials and/or technical support. Departments should also ensure that there is a well-publicised and transparent procedure for allocating funding for conference attendance.

4. Selection, admission and induction of students

4.1 The selection and admission of students to research degree programmes will be undertaken in accordance with the University's Postgraduate Admissions Policy and Procedures (www.york.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/apply/), which is reviewed and updated annually by the Student Recruitment and Admissions Office. The Policy and Procedures (which includes guidance on equal opportunities, accreditation of prior learning, minimum academic and English language standards, and the use of references and interviews) is designed to ensure that: (i) the decision-making process is clear, consistent, fair, and demonstrates equality of opportunity; and (ii) that only appropriately qualified and prepared applicants, for whom an appropriate research environment (see above) can be provided, are admitted to research degree programmes.

4.2 A decision to admit an applicant will involve at least two members of academic staff, normally including the Chair of the departmental Graduate School Board (or other departmental officer) and the prospective supervisor. The department should ensure that individuals involved in admitting research students have received training and guidance to prepare them for this role (normally at least one individual should have attended the training provided by the Admissions Office).

4.3 Before an offer of a place on a MPhil, PhD or EngD programme is made, applicants will be interviewed, either in person or, where this is not practicable e.g. in the case of international applicants, by telephone or video-conferencing. The interview will normally involve the prospective supervisor (but may involve other staff e.g. the Chair of the departmental Graduate School Board, particularly if the supervisor is inexperienced or thinks it would be helpful to have a second opinion). Departments are encouraged to interview for places on MA/MSc by research programmes. The purpose of the interview is to allow the department to take a view on the broad viability of the project as well as the potential credibility of the potential candidate.

4.4 Successful applicants will receive an offer letter from the University which sets out the key details of the programme of study, any conditions attached and which draws attention to the regulations, policies and guidance applicable to research students. The offer letter forms a binding contract on the University and, upon acceptance, on the applicant.

Induction and handbook

4.5 The University, together with the Graduate Student Association (GSA), provides Welcome Week induction events for all postgraduate students. Welcome Week occurs before the formal start of term; details are available on the New Students Welcome Site (www.york.ac.uk/students/new/postgraduate/welcome/)

4.6 All new research students are required to complete the online Research Integrity Tutorial prior to their first Thesis Advisory Panel (TAP) meeting (see also 11.4). Research students are also expected to complete the 'Becoming an Effective Researcher' (BERT) and 'Information Security Awareness' tutorials within six months following the start of their programme. Students can access the online tutorials on the VLE (vle.york.ac.uk). Departments are responsible for ensuring that their students have completed the online tutorials.

4.7 Departments should provide a comprehensive induction programme for all new research students (including those who do not commence their studies at the start of the academic year, are part-time or working at a distance) that dovetails with the central provision. Induction should include departmental-specific information on supervisory arrangements, research and skills training, networking opportunities, facilities, good research conduct, and health and safety, including (where appropriate) health and safety while undertaking work away from the University (e.g. fieldwork and research visits). 'Induction' requirements should be considered as a whole, not simply as an activity for the first few weeks of the student's programme.

4.8 Departments should provide new research students with an appropriate handbook in hardcopy or online for reference.

5. **Supervision**

5.1 Supervisors play a fundamental role in supporting research students throughout their studies. The University recognises, however, that the exact nature of the supervisory process will vary depending on the academic discipline and associated research environment.

Appointment of supervisors

5.2 Each research student will have one or more supervisors. Supervisors are appointed by the Head of Department (or his/her delegate), in consultation with the Chair of the Graduate School Board.

5.3 Where more than one supervisor is appointed, one supervisor will be clearly identified as the main supervisor and first point of contact for the student.

5.4 The main supervisor must be a member of the University's Academic, Research or Teaching staff on a permanent contract *or* a fixed-term contract that extends beyond the expected completion date of the research degree programme *and* should not be planning to leave the University's employment before the expected completion date of the research degree programme. The main supervisor will normally be on a minimum of grade 7 (lecturer equivalent). Where a main supervisor's contract does not specify research supervision and/or the member of staff is at grade 6 (associate lecturer equivalent), it is the responsibility of the Head of Department to ensure that the appointment is appropriate. The main supervisor must have an appropriate level of current expertise in the student's field of research and the supervisor's ability to meet his/her responsibilities should not be put at risk as a result of an excessive volume or range of other responsibilities.

5.5 A subsidiary supervisor (departments are free to use the term second or co-supervisor if they prefer) should normally be appointed when research is being conducted across departments, across institutions, or based in industry or professional practice: in the case of research being conducted

across institutions, or based in industry or professional practice, the appointment may be external to the University. A subsidiary supervisor might be appointed when a research project is highly interdisciplinary.

- 5.6 A subsidiary supervisor should also be appointed if a main supervisor has not yet seen a research student (PhD/EngD/MPhil) through to successful completion (as a main or subsidiary supervisor). *In this case*, the role of the subsidiary supervisor is not only to provide additional supervisory support for the student but also to serve as an advisor/mentor for the main supervisor: the individual appointed should, therefore, be a member of University's academic staff with experience of successful research student supervision. The Chair of the Graduate School Board shall have the authority to determine whether a main supervisor's previous experience is sufficient for them to be appointed as a sole supervisor (where applicable).
- 5.7 Where a subsidiary supervisor is appointed, there should be clear agreement, preferably in writing, between the research student and the supervisors with regard to how the relationship will be managed, for example the respective responsibilities of the supervisors, how the formal supervisory meetings will be arranged, and how information will be shared between the parties.

Training and monitoring of supervisors

- 5.8 The University believes that effective supervision is a skill that is best learnt experientially, with the support of more experienced colleagues (the apprenticeship model). Departments should, therefore, encourage staff who are new to supervision to gain experience of the supervisory process through serving as subsidiary supervisors and on Thesis Advisory Panels. A main supervisor who has not seen a research student (MPhil/EngD/PhD) through to successful completion should be paired with an experienced subsidiary supervisor (see above).
- 5.9 Departments should encourage those new to supervision, or in need of updating their skills and knowledge, to take a training course in supervision. Learning and Development provides training opportunities for new and existing supervisors and an introductory session on supervision is an optional component of the University's Postgraduate Certificate of Academic Practice for new academic staff.
- 5.10 Research students are asked about the supervision that they receive at every Thesis Advisory Panel meeting. Departments should ensure that any problems highlighted through this mechanism are dealt with appropriately by the Head of Department (or his/her delegate).

Supervisory meetings

- 5.11 The purpose and likely frequency of supervisory meetings, both formal and informal, at different stages of the research degree programme, should be made clear to the research student by the supervisor, at the departmental induction at the outset of the programme, and in the department's handbook for research students. Research students and supervisors are jointly responsible for ensuring that regular and frequent contact is maintained and both parties should feel able to take the initiative when necessary. A meeting with the supervisor, if requested by the student, should normally take place within one week.

5.12 Formal supervisory meetings, at which substantial discussion of, and feedback on, research progress and plans and a conversation about development and training needs take place, are vital for ensuring that a student's research project remains on target. Formal Supervision meetings must be held 8 times per year, with an expectation of 1 meeting at least every 6-7 weeks for both full-time and part-time students during the normal enrolment period and more frequently if a Graduate School Board prescribes. This requirement may only be temporarily waived by the Graduate School Board of the department concerned where the research student is absent on academic grounds and unable (e.g. due to the fieldwork location) to participate in a supervisory meeting by alternative means, normally video-conferencing. Formal supervisory meetings normally take place in person but where this is not possible (e.g. due to a student being on placement or a supervisor on sabbatical) alternative means, preferably video-conferencing, may be used.

5.13 A record of each formal supervisory meeting should be drawn up by the research student and approved by the supervisor, and saved on the student records system, in order to be accessible to both. The record should include the date of the meeting and a summary of the content of the meeting and of future actions to be performed, including agreed training.

Absence and replacement of a supervisor

5.14 Students should be informed of who would be their first point of contact if their main supervisor were to be temporarily unavailable. This would normally be the subsidiary supervisor, if one has been appointed, or, if not, another member of their Thesis Advisory Panel (but note 8.16).

5.15 In the event of a main supervisor becoming unable to continue supervising a research student, a replacement supervisor should be appointed, after consultation with the student, within one month of the main supervisor becoming unavailable. In the meantime, the designated person (see above) should assume the role of the main supervisor. Heads of Departments should liaise with Chairs of departmental Graduate School Boards regarding forthcoming resignations from the University of members of staff with supervisory responsibility for research students. Chairs should as soon as practicable inform research students formally in writing if their supervisor resigns, giving information on the arrangements for continued supervision.

5.16 In the event of a main supervisor transferring to another institution, a research student may wish to move with them (see 7.23). Alternatively, s/he may remain at York with a replacement supervisor being appointed as above. The former main supervisor may be appointed as a subsidiary supervisor to provide continuity of supervision for the student concerned.

5.17 If a research student is unhappy with his/her supervision s/he should attempt to resolve the matter informally in the first instance. If s/he feels unable to discuss this directly with his/her supervisor, or the problem remains unresolved having done this, then s/he should feel free to talk confidentially about the problem with another member of their Thesis Advisory Panel, the Chair of the Graduate School Board, the Head of Department or other relevant departmental officer. If the problem remains unresolved, the student should arrange to speak in confidence to the Dean of YGRS, who will advise the student on the options available to them, which might include mediation with the department (see also section 14 on complaints).

5.18 By mutual agreement between the research student and the department, and where permitted by the terms of the research council (or other sponsor/funding body) agreement, supervisory responsibilities can be changed, at the request of either the research student or a supervisor.

6. Responsibilities of research students and supervisors

6.1 The responsibilities of research students include:

- (i) taking responsibility for their own personal and professional development, including, where possible, recognising when they need help and seeking it in a timely manner;
- (ii) maintaining (a joint responsibility with supervisors) regular contact with supervisors (both full-time and part-time students are required to attend formal supervisory meetings not less than twice a quarter and more frequently if a Graduate School Board prescribes);
- (iii) preparing adequately for meetings with supervisors and Thesis Advisory Panels;
- (iv) setting and keeping to timetables and deadlines, including planning and submitting required work and generally maintaining satisfactory progress with the programme of research;
- (v) making supervisors aware of any specific needs or circumstances likely to affect their work;
- (vi) attending any development opportunities (research-related and other) that have been identified when agreeing their development needs with their supervisors;
- (vii) adhering to the University's regulations, policies and guidance regarding research degree programmes, including those relating to health and safety, and intellectual property;
- (viii) conducting research with integrity, in accordance with the University's policy framework (including the Code of practice on ethics, the Policy on research integrity (under development) and the Policy on research data management (under development)) and any legal compliance and/or funder requirements;
- (ix) ensuring (a joint responsibility with supervisors) that appropriate ethical approval is obtained before research commences;
- (x) maintaining records of their professional development.

6.2 The responsibilities of the main supervisor of a research student include:

- (i) introducing the student to the department, its facilities and procedures, and to other research students and staff;
- (ii) providing satisfactory advice and guidance on the conduct of the research and on the preparation of the thesis;

- (iii) monitoring the progress of the student's research programme, reporting on progress to the departmental Graduate School Board, and ensuring the student is aware of the need to submit the thesis by the specified deadline;
- (iv) encouraging the student to participate fully in the planning of his/her research and to take personal responsibility for the decisions made;
- (v) establishing and maintaining (a joint responsibility with the student) regular contact with the student, including during any periods in which the student is working on their research away from the University, and being accessible to the student to give advice;
- (vi) having input into the assessment of the student's development needs, and ensuring that instruction is provided in research methods and other academic skills relevant to the student's research;
- (vii) monitoring and supporting the student's professional development;
- (viii) providing timely, constructive and effective feedback on the student's work and overall progress within the programme;
- (ix) ensuring that the student has a clear understanding of the need to exercise probity and to conduct research according to the University's policy framework (including the Code of practice on ethics, the Policy on research integrity (under development) and the Policy on research data management (under development)) and any legal compliance and/or funder requirements, and of the implications of research misconduct;
- (x) ensuring that, in the case of students undertaking laboratory work, there is an appropriate level of supervision and monitoring, including regular checks on data-recording and notebooks and occasional checks on the day-to-day conduct of experiments;
- (xi) ensuring (a joint responsibility with the student) that appropriate ethical approval is obtained before research commences;
- (xii) ensuring that the student is aware of relevant sources of advice within the University, including those relating to careers guidance;
- (xiii) ensuring that they meet their responsibilities to the student under the University's Health, Safety and Welfare Policy Statement and Arrangements (www.york.ac.uk/admin/hsas/);
- (xiv) providing effective pastoral support and, where appropriate, referring the student to other sources of such support within the University;
- (xv) helping and encouraging the student to interact with others working in the field of research (for example, encouraging the student to attend relevant conferences and supporting him/her in seeking funding for such events), and to keep themselves informed of developments within their subject;

- (xvi) where appropriate, helping and encouraging the student to submit conference papers and articles to refereed journals;
- (xvii) maintaining the necessary supervisory expertise;
- (xviii) exercising sensitivity to the diverse needs of individual students, including international students and those with a disability.

6.3 Although supervisors may encourage their supervisees to seek advice on particular academic topics from other members of staff, the supervisor has the primary responsibility for directing the research to a satisfactory conclusion. It is, therefore, essential that the supervisor should approve the general content and planning of the research.

7. **Periods of enrolment, and changes to students' status and personal circumstances**

Periods of enrolment and modes of attendance

7.1 The normal and maximum periods of study (i.e. from initial enrolment to the submission of the thesis) for full-time PhD, EngD, MPhil, MA/MSc by research programmes are as follows:

Degree	Normal period of enrolment (full-time)	Normal period of enrolment (part-time)	Minimum period of enrolment (full-time)	Minimum period of enrolment (part-time)	Maximum period of study (including any continuation period) (full-time)	Maximum period of study (including any continuation period) (part-time)
PhD (standard)	three years	six years	two years and nine months	five years and six months	four years	seven years
PhD (named four-year version)	four years	eight years	three years and nine months	seven years and six months	four years*	Not currently available.
EngD	four years	Not currently available.	three years and nine months	Not currently available.	five years	Not currently available.
MPhil	two years	four years	one year and nine months	three years and six months	three years	five years
MA/MSc by research	one year	two years	nine months	one year and nine months	one year and three months	two years and three months

*An exceptional fifth year can be approved by YGRSB as part of the programme specification in exceptional circumstances.

These limits do not include any allowance for leave of absence/extension of submission, the criteria for which are outlined in Sections 7.11-7.16.

7.2 Research students are expected to submit their theses within the normal period of enrolment and supervisors and departments should actively encourage students to meet this deadline. The final deadline for submission is at the end of the maximum period of study and is recorded in eVision. Failure to submit by the final submission deadline (last day of enrolment, or the next working day if a weekend or Bank Holiday) will result in failure of the degree.

7.3 The normal period of enrolment for part-time research students is pro rata to the period of full-time study. Normally part-time students are 0.5 full-time-equivalent.

7.4 A student who wishes to submit a thesis before the end of the minimum period of enrolment may only do so on the recommendation of the Graduate School Board concerned and with the permission of Standing Committee on Assessment. In such circumstances the student will still be required to pay the full fees for the programme of study.

7.5 The overall maximum completion period for students, including any leave of absence or extensions, is the maximum period of study for the programme plus five years.

Continuation period

7.6 Students on an MPhil, three-year PhD, and EngD programme who have not submitted their theses within the normal period of full-time or part-time enrolment are permitted a further period of up to one year in which to submit their thesis. Students on an MA/MSc by research programme who have not submitted their theses within the normal period of full-time or part-time enrolment are allowed a further period of up to three months in which to submit their thesis. The continuation period, if required, is for finalising the thesis ready for submission and not for primary research or data analysis.

7.7 Students following four-year (or equivalent part-time) PhD programmes should submit their thesis by the end of the normal period of enrolment. Four-year PhD programmes do not normally have a continuation period as they are not required to contain more than six months of extra material (relative to a three-year programme) and are intended by their very nature to accelerate completion and to increase the prospects of submission within four years. Exceptionally, a continuation year for a four-year PhD programme may be approved by YGRSB for finalising the thesis ready for submission and not for primary research or data analysis.

Students who exceed the normal period of enrolment with permission

7.8 Research students who have permission to exceed the normal period of enrolment (i.e. those in a continuation period where this is permitted and/or who have had an extension of submission deadline approved) will pay an annual continuation fee (which can be refunded if students submit within three months of the end of their normal period of enrolment) to remain as candidates for the degree concerned, and to retain access to computing and library facilities. They will not, however, be in formal enrolment with the University. The normal period of enrolment is not necessarily linked to the length of funding and this means that continuation fees will be payable even if a student is still in receipt of a research council (or other sponsor/funding body) award.

7.9 Students who exceed the normal period of enrolment with permission should not expect to conduct further research and may make use of departmental facilities only with the written agreement of the Chair of the departmental Graduate School Board.

7.10 Students who exceed the normal period of enrolment with permission are responsible for maintaining contact with their supervisors until they are ready to submit their thesis for examination, and, where applicable, to meet obligations under the University Attendance Policy (<https://www.york.ac.uk/students/studying/tier4/attendance/>); for many theses, a supervisor's advice is at its most valuable and essential at the stage of writing the final draft. Departments should make clear to students the level of supervisory support that can be expected if the normal period of enrolment is exceeded with permission: students can expect to receive more limited support than is the expectation during the normal period of enrolment; nevertheless, students can expect their supervisor to provide some support and in particular to read and comment on the final draft of the thesis before submission.

Leave of absence

7.11 A leave of absence allows a research student to take an authorised break in their studies for a documented medical or personal reason.

7.12 Leave of absence will normally be granted for a maximum of one year at a time and a maximum of two years in total. If a research student wishes to take a leave of absence they must apply in advance for permission to do so: leave of absence that is entirely retrospective will not be considered or approved. A leave of absence will not be considered in the student's first month of enrolment.

7.13 Any student can apply for a leave of absence, however, approval for a leave of absence is not guaranteed. Leave of absence may be subject to the approval of the research council (or other sponsor/funding body) concerned. A student's visa may impose additional restrictions upon their ability to take leave of absence, which are beyond the control of the University.

7.14 During a leave of absence, research students are expected to spend their time away from the University and will not normally have access to University services and resources.

Extensions of submission deadline

7.15 An extension of submission deadline is required for a research student who has not submitted his/her thesis within the maximum period of study (i.e. the normal period of enrolment plus any permitted continuation period). Extensions of submission deadline are granted only in exceptional circumstances, namely, where the student's work has been hampered by documented exceptional medical, personal or employment reasons. The magnitude of the research task, or failure on the part of the candidate to perceive or act upon the magnitude of the research task, is not a sufficient reason for an extension, nor is the need, in itself, to take employment in any permitted continuation period.

7.16 An extension request will not be considered until the student is within the final three months of their continuation period. An extension of submission will normally be limited to six months, unless a compelling case is made for a longer period of up to a maximum of one year. The total period of extension that may normally be approved is a maximum of two years (except in the case of MA/MSc

by Research, where the total period of extension that may normally be approved is a maximum of one year).

Transfer of programme

- 7.17 A student enrolled on a research degree programme may request a transfer to a different research degree where such degrees are available and provided that the transfer takes place before the thesis is submitted and subject to the particular restrictions noted below. A coherent and realistic plan for the completion and submission of the thesis within the required period must be submitted as part of the approval process.
- 7.18 Where a student wishes to transfer from an MA/MSc by research to an MPhil or PhD/EngD programme, or from an MPhil programme to a PhD/EngD programme the department should ensure that this decision is considered in detail at a TAP meeting, prior to approval by the Chair of the Graduate School Board. Transfers should take place prior the submission of the thesis (for students initially enrolled on a MA/MSc by research and wishing to transfer to an MPhil or PhD/EngD) or normally prior to the first formal progression point (for students initially enrolled on an MPhil and wishing to transfer to a PhD/EngD) to ensure that there is the same rigorous assessment of the student's ability to complete the MPhil/PhD/EngD degree within the required timeframe as for students initially enrolled for those degrees.
- 7.19 A research student who has enrolled on a three-year PhD programme may transfer to a four-year PhD programme only exceptionally and with the express permission of Special Cases Committee, and on the understanding that the student will complete the additional requirements of the four-year programme. A student who has enrolled on a four-year PhD programme may transfer to a three-year PhD programme only exceptionally and with the express permission of Special Cases Committee.

Requesting a leave of absence, extension of submission deadline or transfer of programme

- 7.20 Research students requesting a leave of absence, extension of submission deadline or transfer of programme should first approach their supervisor. Recommendations for leave of absence, extensions or transfers should be made, with independent supporting evidence where appropriate, by the departmental Graduate School Board concerned to the Research Student Administration Team. Recommendations will be considered by the Research Student Administration Team and approved under delegated authority or referred to Special Cases Committee for consideration where necessary (www.york.ac.uk/staff/supporting-students/issues/academic/research/ and www.york.ac.uk/research/graduate-school/support/change/).

Paid employment and holidays

- 7.21 Full-time research students may undertake a maximum of twenty hours of paid employment per week (this includes teaching and demonstrating and the associated preparation and marking). This maximum is subject to any restrictions imposed by the student's research council (or other sponsor/funding body) and the approval of his/her supervisor (on the understanding that it will not result in delayed submission of the thesis). Exceptions to these requirements may be made by YGRSB (at the programme level) or the Graduate School Board (for individual students) on the recommendation of the Graduate School Board or supervisor respectively, for certain categories of employment closely related to the programme of study.

7.22 Subject to the agreement of the supervisor(s) and any conditions placed by the research council (or other sponsor/funding body), research students may take reasonable holidays (annual leave) not exceeding 30 days (plus public holidays) in any year. The student is responsible for recording their annual leave and should seek permission from their supervisor for any break of more than 5 consecutive working days.

Transferring into or out of the University of York

7.23 In exceptional cases, a research student may wish to transfer into or out of the University of York. This is most likely to be the case when the student's main supervisor is transferring from one institution to another and the student wishes to move with them.

7.24 If a research student wishes to transfer from York to another university, this will be dependent on the decision of the other institution to accept the student. Permission may also have to be gained from the research council (or other sponsor/funding body). A copy of the data produced by the student must be deposited with the University before departure (see the University's Policy on research data management).

7.25 If a research student wishes to transfer from another university to York, s/he will be considered by RSAT on behalf of Special Cases Committee for exceptional entry and their research, where applicable, will be subject to a light touch ethical review (in accordance with the University's Code of practice on ethics). The Committee will ensure that the student is clear about the basis on which they are being accepted (including the length of enrolment (including any entitlement to a writing up period), any variation to standard progress and review arrangements, and any accreditation of prior learning to recognise courses and modules already undertaken etc.).

International students

7.26 For sponsored international students (i.e. those subject to Tier 4 visa regulations), all time limits and changes to status etc. are subject to current Home Office visa regulations (www.york.ac.uk/students/support/international/immigration/). Sponsored international students must be monitored by departments in accordance with the University's Attendance Management Policy for Sponsored International Students (www.york.ac.uk/staff/supporting-students/issues/pbis/attendance/): this includes the monitoring of formal supervisory meetings and Thesis Advisory Panel meetings (and any additional points of contact required for students who exceed the normal period of enrolment).

8. Progress and review arrangements

8.1 Regular review of a research student's progress is essential to maximise the likelihood of the student completing the programme successfully within an appropriate timescale, and to ensure that if progress is unsatisfactory that s/he is given the support they need to make improvements. Formal supervisory meetings and routine meetings of Thesis Advisory Panels (see below) form a key part of this regular review process. In addition, MPhil and PhD/EngD students are subject to formal reviews of progress (see below). Additional progression points may be introduced when proposed by a department and approved by YGRSB.

8.2 Departments are encouraged to specify milestones for research students to monitor their progress against (which may or may not be assessed as part of formal reviews of progress). This could include expectations regarding skills training (e.g. the completion of certain courses/modules by a particular point), and expectations regarding the dissemination of information (for example, in some disciplines, a typical PhD student might present a poster at an internal conference in year 1, present an internal seminar on their work in year 2, present their work at an external conference and be in the process of submitting a paper for publication by the time of thesis submission).

Thesis Advisory Panels

8.3 Each research student will have a Thesis Advisory Panel (TAP). The principal purposes of the panel are to review the progress of the student's research programme and Professional Development Plan (PDP), and to supplement, where appropriate, the advice and guidance given to the student by the supervisor(s).

8.4 The TAP consists of the supervisor(s) (the supervisory team) *and at least one additional* member of the University's Academic, Research or Teaching staff. If there is a single supervisor the minimum TAP size is two; if there are two supervisors the minimum TAP size is three. The panel will be appointed within the first three months of the student's enrolment period, and the student will be informed of its membership.

8.5 Departments should consider carefully the composition of each TAP (in terms of the number of people, their expertise and their experience) to ensure that it can properly fulfil its purpose (including any role of the TAP in respect to formal reviews of progress, see below). Emeritus, visiting staff and staff on probation may be additional members of a TAP.

TAP meetings

8.6 For full-time students, the TAP will meet with the student at least once within every six-month period (i.e. in months 1-6, 7-12, 13-18 etc., for full-time MPhil, EngD and PhD students). For part-time students, the TAP will meet with the student at least once a year. Any member of the panel, or the student, may request a panel meeting at other times. Meetings of the TAP are additional to formal supervisory meetings but may be integrated with progress review meetings (see below). The TAP is expected to meet only during the student's normal enrolment period. The purpose and target dates of the TAP meetings to be held during the research degree programme should be made clear to the student by the supervisor at the outset of the programme.

8.7 The main supervisor and research student are responsible for ensuring that TAP meetings take place on schedule. Departments should record the dates of each TAP meeting on the student record system. The Research Student Administration Team will monitor the timing of TAP meetings using the student record system and will contact the Chair of the departmental Graduate School Board if any meetings do not take place on schedule.

8.8 In preparation for a TAP meeting, a research student should complete the University TAP form and provide relevant supporting documentation in order to summarise progress on their work during the review period and outline his/her future objectives. The supervisor should provide a comprehensive written report on the student's progress.

- 8.9 Following the TAP meeting, a brief report on the outcome and future actions, agreed by all the panel members, should be produced on the University TAP form, and it will be recorded to the student record system where it will be accessible to the student and TAP members. The Chair of the departmental Graduate School Board will monitor TAP forms to ensure process and quality are appropriate.
- 8.10 Research students should be given an opportunity to comment confidentially on the quality of their supervision at the TAP meeting in the absence of the supervisor. The discussion will be recorded in the Review of Supervision form, which is not to be seen by the supervisor(s). If any concerns about the supervisory arrangements are raised by the student during this part of the TAP meeting, it is the role of the TAP member(s) to discuss possible solutions with the student.
- 8.11 If the TAP structure is not operating properly, a research student should contact the Chair of their departmental Graduate School Board or Board of Studies or Head of Department. If the issue remains unresolved, a student should contact the Dean of YGRS for advice.

Formal reviews of progress for MPhil, PhD and EngD students

*NOTE: Students registered on PhD and EngD programmes before 1st September 2016 are subject to the **Confirmation of Enrolment** process, which can be found here: [WEBLINK](#)*

Purpose of formal reviews of progress

- 8.12 A student is admitted to a PhD/EngD or MPhil programme on the basis of an assessment of their potential at the admissions stage. Remaining on the PhD/EngD or MPhil programme is conditional on the student making satisfactory progress with respect to their research project and the other elements of their PhD/EngD or MPhil programme.
- 8.13 The purpose of formal reviews of progress is, therefore, to ensure that students on PhD/EngD and MPhil programmes are making satisfactory progress. Formal reviews of progress take place on an annual basis for full-time PhD/EngD and MPhil students (towards the end of a student's academic year) and on a biennial basis for part-time PhD and MPhil students. Formal reviews of progress are not required for entry into a continuation period, where this is permitted.
- 8.14 In a formal review of progress, a PhD, EngD or MPhil student is assessed against the relevant University progression criteria by a progression panel. Students are permitted a maximum of two opportunities to meet the relevant University progression criteria at each formal review of progress. If a student has not met the relevant University progression criteria after two attempts they will be deemed to have failed the progression point and they will be transferred to an alternative programme or their enrolment will be terminated.
- 8.15 Full details on formal reviews of progress are provided in Appendix 4 of the Policy on Research Degrees: **Policy on PhD/EngD and MPhil Progression**.

Composition of the progression panel

8.16 The progression panel for a PhD/EngD or MPhil student should comprise at least two individuals and be independent of the student's supervisor(s). The progression panel should be chaired by a senior academic member of the same or cognate department who has experience of successful research student supervision in the broad disciplinary area within which the student is based.

8.17 Progression panels are not expected to make detailed judgements about a student's research project, nor to direct the student's future work; rather, they are required to determine, on the basis of the evidence from the student and the supervisor's report, if the student meets the relevant University criteria for progression (which are threshold requirements).

Timing of formal reviews of progress

8.18 Formal reviews of progress will take place according to the schedule below. Students must complete all aspects of the review, and the recommendation of the Graduate School Board must be submitted to SCA for consideration, by the appropriate deadline.

Maximum period of enrolment prior to progression reviews

	FT Student First Attempt	FT Student Second Attempt	PT Student First Attempt	PT Student Second Attempt
PhD/EngD & MPhil First Formal Review of Progress	9-12 Months	15 Months (no more than 3 months after first attempt)	18-24 Months	30 Months (no more than 6 months after first attempt)
PhD/EngD Second Formal Review of Progress	21-24 Months	27 Months (no more than 3 months after first attempt)	42-48 Months	54 Months (no more than 6 months after first attempt)
4 Year PhD/EngD Third Formal Review of Progress	33-36 Months	39 Months (no more than 3 months after first attempt)	66-72 Months	78 Months (no more than 6 months after first attempt)

Evidence considered by the progress review panel

8.19 Departments determine what evidence (written and often oral) PhD/EngD and MPhil students should provide to demonstrate that they have met the relevant University progression criteria. Evidence from the student is considered alongside the supervisor's report on the student's progress and, where required by a department, agreed TAP reports.

Progression criteria

8.20 The University's progression criteria for PhD/EngD and MPhil programmes set out the *threshold* requirements for progression to the next stage. They should be understood by reference to what a conscientious research student might reasonably expect to have achieved in the time available. Details of the University's progression criteria are provided in Appendix 4 of the Policy on Research Degrees: **Policy on PhD/EngD and MPhil Progression**.

Progress review meetings

8.21 The progression panel will consider the evidence from the student alongside the supervisor's report, and, where required by a department, agreed TAP reports at a progress review meeting. Based on these elements the progression panel will make a decision as to whether the student has met, exceeded or not met the relevant University progression criteria, and make a recommendation regarding student progression to the GSB and consequently to the SCA on behalf of Senate

8.22 If a department's evidence requirements include oral evidence obtained at the progress review meeting, then a student will, as a matter of course, be present at their progress review meeting.

8.23 If a department's evidence requirements do not include oral evidence obtained at the progress review meeting, then a student will not, as a matter of course, be present at their progress review meeting. If, however, a progression panel does not feel able, on the basis of the evidence provided by a student and/or the supervisor's report and/or the agreed TAP reports (if applicable), to recommend that an individual student be progressed, then a meeting at which the student in question is present, along with at least two members of the progression panel, must be scheduled as soon as possible (and within department's specified window for progress review meetings) to give the student every opportunity to demonstrate that they have met the relevant University progression criteria.

8.24 Successful progression should be recommended to, and will be approved by the Standing Committee on Assessment (SCA) on behalf of Senate, where the student has met the relevant University criteria.

Referral

8.25 If, at a student's first attempt, a progression panel decides that a student has *not yet* met the relevant University progression criteria, it must recommend referral (a second opportunity to meet the progression criteria), programme transfer or withdrawal. The recommendation will be considered by the relevant departmental GSB. If the GSB endorses the recommendation, the student will be informed of the next steps.

8.26 The progression panel will provide the student with clear written feedback about why the progression criteria were not met and its reasons for recommending referral, transfer or withdrawal. The progression panel will specify, in broad terms, what the student would need to do to meet the relevant University progression criteria at the second attempt.

8.27 In the case of a recommendation for programme transfer or withdrawal, the student may choose to accept the recommendation or, alternatively, decide to make a second attempt at meeting the relevant University progression criteria against the advice of the progression panel. The student must confirm whether they wish to contest a recommendation for transfer or withdrawal within four

weeks of the recommendation being endorsed by the relevant departmental GSB, otherwise the recommendation will stand.

- 8.28 If the progression panel decides that the student has met or exceeded the relevant University progression criteria at the second attempt it should recommend that the student be progressed. If, however, the progression panel decides that the student has *not* met the relevant University progression criteria at the second attempt, the student will be deemed to have failed the progression point and the progression panel must recommend that the student be transferred to an MPhil programme (for students enrolled on a PhD programme only); *or* that the student be transferred to a Master's by research programme; *or* that the student's enrolment with the University be terminated. The progression panel should provide reasons for its recommendation. If the GSB endorses the recommendation of the progression panel, it will be forwarded to the SCA for consideration and approval on behalf of Senate.
- 8.29 If a student progresses at the second attempt this does not alter the timing of the next formal review of progress (if applicable), nor change the period of enrolment, nor alter the deadline for submission of the thesis.
- 8.30 Transfer to an alternative programme is subject to the approval of any extensions, if required, and the student will be bound by the regulations and requirements of their new programme.
- 8.31 A student retains the right of appeal against a failure to progress, as outlined in the Regulations.

Extensions to progression deadlines

- 8.32 An extension request will not be considered until the student is within two months of their progression deadline. Any extension will normally be limited to two months. The total period of extension that may normally be approved is a maximum of four months.
- 8.33 Any extension to the deadline for a formal review of progress does not alter the timing of the next formal review of progress (if applicable), nor change the period of enrolment, nor alter the deadline for submission of the thesis.

9 Development of research and other skills

- 9.1 In line with The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (www.vitae.ac.uk/concordat) and the Research Council UK's Statement of Expectations for Doctoral Training (www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/researchcareers/statementofexpectation.pdf), research students are strongly encouraged to take advantage of the training made available to them to support their research, to enhance their employability and to assist their career progress after completion of their degree.
- 9.2 Research students are expected to: (i) complete the 'Becoming an Effective Researcher' (BERT) online tutorial (see 4.5), (ii) engage with the University's professional development planning process (see 9.5). Students are also required to undertake the Research Integrity tutorial prior to their first TAP (see 11.4) and PGWT training prior to teaching or demonstrating (see 9.14). They may also be required by their departmental Graduate School Board to undertake subject-specific training (see 9.7 - 9.12).

9.3 Much of the training that research students receive is informal (e.g. instruction on techniques or the use of equipment and other resources) and comes from their supervisor(s), TAP, or wider research group. Formal training is provided by departments, and by the Researcher Excellence Training Team (RETT) (www.york.ac.uk/admin/hr/researcher-development/students/). The RETT offers a comprehensive suite of personal and professional skills training, including courses for those involved in teaching/demonstrating and/or those who wish to pursue an academic career. Training is also provided by external partners, for example within collaborative Doctoral Training Centres and nationally (for example vitae.ac.uk).

9.4 Research students are responsible for keeping an accurate and comprehensive record of the training (whether provided centrally, departmental or externally) and other enrichment activities that they have undertaken (e.g. presentations made, conferences attended, teaching, demonstrating, or internships undertaken, etc.). The SkillsForge system provides for recording of training and other activities alongside records of professional development engagement. Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that students are aware of any training or development requirements imposed by a research council (or other sponsor/funding body) and for ensuring that opportunities are available to satisfy any such requirements. Students are responsible for ensuring that these requirements are met.

Professional development planning

9.5 Research students are expected to complete, in consultation with their supervisor and with guidance from the RETT, a Professional Development Plan (PDP) (www.york.ac.uk/admin/hr/researcher-development/students/professional-development-planning.htm). A PDP is a record of the skills developed throughout a student's research programme and its purpose is to prompt reflection on, and discussion about, the student's personal, professional and career development. The process for ensuring that a student maintains a PDP is as follows:

- (i) *initial analysis* (by six months for full-time PhD/EngD/MPhil students, by three months for full-time MA/MSc by research students). Students will undertake a training needs analysis (TNA) and discuss the results with their supervisor in order to identify appropriate short, medium and long term development goals. These goals will be recorded on their PDP.
- (ii) *review and updating*. Students should review their goals against their TNA and update their PDP by reflecting on their personal, professional and career development. Supervisors are encouraged to discuss and review each student's PDP as part of their regular supervisory meetings. At each Thesis Advisory Panel (TAP) meeting, there should a discussion (noted in the University TAP form) about the progress that the student has made in addressing his/her PDP (students are encouraged to share their PDP with TAP members as appropriate). The PDP will be formally approved by the TAP as part of the progression process (PhD and EngD students only).

9.6 Research students are encouraged to take advantage of the careers advice and guidance available to them: (www.york.ac.uk/research/graduate-school/support/careers/). All York students can register using their York email to access to the extensive Vitae Careers Resources: <https://www.vitae.ac.uk/researcher-careers>

Departmental training requirements, including taught modules

9.7 The Graduate School Board is responsible for deciding whether students on a particular research degree programme should be subject to any formal training requirements (for example auditing or passing particular courses or credit-bearing modules, and/or completing a certain number of hours/days of training per annum), taking into the account, where applicable, the expectations of the relevant research council (or other sponsor/funding body). The introduction of, or significant changes to, formal training requirements should be considered a major modification to a programme and submitted to YGRSB for approval (normally by Chair's action).

9.8 The Graduate School Board should ensure that formal departmental training requirements are: (i) necessary (directly relevant to students' research degree programmes), (ii) reasonable (achievable within the time-frame available without negative impact on a student's research, see below), and (iii) equitable (for example, within the department or inter-institutional Doctoral Training Centre or equivalent).

9.9 For research programmes where YGRSB has *not* formally approved a package of training (i.e. excluding, for example, YGRSB-approved doctoral training centre PhD programmes), YGRSB would not normally expect formal departmental training requirements (including credit-bearing modules (these should use normal notional hours of study, i.e. 10 credits is a notional 100 hours of study), and non-credit-bearing courses) to exceed 500 hours in the first year of a three-year PhD programme and 700 hours in the first year of a four-year PhD programme (note that these are maximums not norms) in order to leave sufficient time for a student to begin their research.

9.10 Departmental training requirements must be explained to the students at departmental induction and specified in the department's handbook for research students. Research students must be told how they may obtain an exemption from departmental training requirements (including those relating to credit-bearing modules) through the recognition of prior learning (e.g. if a PhD student has already completed a relevant MRes programme s/he might be eligible to gain an exemption from certain compulsory methodology courses/modules). Where students are required to pass non-credit-bearing courses and/or credit-bearing modules, it must be clear what reassessment opportunities, if any, available.

9.11 Where research students are required to undertake a module for credit, they should be registered for the module in the student records system and will be eligible for an academic transcript. Credits within a research degree programme will normally be at masters or doctoral level. The level of attainment required should be that normally expected of the module (i.e. for masters level modules the pass mark should be 50%) and the assessment tasks should be the same as for any other students registered on the module. It should be clear whether credit-bearing modules can be compensated or re-assessed and these rules must be approved by YGRS and specified in the department's handbook for research students.

Failure to meet departmental training requirements

9.12 Failure to meet departmental training requirements (including those relating to credit-bearing modules) can be used to inform progression decisions (for example, if as a consequence of failure to meet departmental training requirements, a student does not meet the relevant University progression criteria). Failure to meet departmental training requirements should not, on its own, be

grounds for a student to be discontinued from his/her programme or to fail a formal progression point unless this option is explicitly approved for a particular research degree programme by YGRSB.

Role of research students in teaching and demonstrating

- 9.13 Departments are encouraged to offer PhD, EngD and MPhil students opportunities to engage in teaching or demonstrating, where available. Departments must ensure that their practice with regard to Postgraduates Who Teach (PGWT) is compliant with the University Policy on Postgraduates Who Teach (www.york.ac.uk/admin/hr/resources/policy/postgraduates-who-teach.htm), which is reviewed and updated annually by University Teaching Committee, and which includes the circumstances in which research students can become PGWT, training and support for PGWT, selection of PGWT, and quality assurance and enhancement for PGWT.
- 9.14 Departments are responsible for ensuring that PGWT meet the minimum requirements outlined in the University Policy on Postgraduates Who Teach before undertaking any teaching or demonstrating, namely having participated in the Introduction to Learning and Teaching course (run by the RETT, which can supply departments with attendance registers) *and* having undergone appropriate departmental training. PGWT and those who are intending to pursue an academic career are encouraged to take advantage of the extensive training on offer from the RETT, including the accredited 'York Learning and Teaching Award' programme (www.york.ac.uk/admin/hr/researcher-development/pgwt/).

10 Evaluation of research degree programmes

- 10.1 Departments must have in place appropriate mechanisms for: (i) research students and recent graduates, and their supervisors to evaluate their experience, (ii) monitoring TAP reports (including those relating to annual progression), and (iii) reviewing examiners' reports. Departments may wish to consider whether feedback might usefully be requested from other interested parties e.g. sponsors, research administrators, alumni, employers and collaborating organisations.
- 10.2 At the end of each Thesis Advisory Panel meeting students are asked to comment confidentially on the quality of the supervision received and on the student/supervisor relationship (see 8.11). Departments should ensure that there is a process in place for attempting to resolve any issues raised in this way.
- 10.3 Departments also receive feedback from research student representatives. Each department must ensure that there is at least one research student on its Graduate School Board (or equivalent).
- 10.4 Graduate School Boards should consider the data noted above in the context of centrally distributed data (including PRES data, submission and completion data etc.) and ensure that any issues raised are dealt with appropriately.
- 10.5 When undertaking Annual Programme Review, a department should ensure that research students and their programmes are fully covered and, where relevant, issues are flagged for consideration by the YGRSB.
- 10.6 YGRSB will work with UTC to ensure that the institution's Annual Programme Review and Periodic Review processes pay due attention to research students and their programmes. A member of the

Graduate Students Association represents all postgraduate students on YGRSB, UTC and the Standing Committee on Assessment.

11 Research integrity and ethics

11.1 In line with the UUK Concordat to support research integrity, research students and their supervisors are expected to maintain the highest standards of research conduct and to act in accordance with the University's policy framework (the Code of practice on ethics (www.york.ac.uk/staff/research/governance/policies/ethics-code), the Code of practice on research integrity (www.york.ac.uk/staff/research/governance/policies/research-code/) and the Policy on research data management (www.york.ac.uk/about/departments/support-and-admin/information-directorate/information-policy/index/research-data-management-policy/): www.york.ac.uk/staff/research/governance/).

11.2 Any ethical issues relating to a student's research (including any issues relating to the University's duty of care to the research student) must be identified at the earliest opportunity (ideally before admission) by the supervisor and the research student, with reference to the University's Code of practice on ethics, and seeking advice where necessary from the department's ethics committee. Where formal ethical approval from an internal ethics committee and, where necessary, an external body is needed, the supervisor and the research student will be jointly responsible for securing this in accordance with the Code of practice on ethics (www.york.ac.uk/staff/research/governance/policies/ethics-code/) before the research commences. Confirmation of ethical approval (where needed) is required for formal reviews of progress and at the point of thesis submission.

Training

11.3 The University (via the RETT) and departments will provide research students with guidance on good research practice, with reference to the University's policy framework, and the avoidance of academic misconduct.

11.4 Research students are expected to complete successfully the University Online Research Integrity Tutorial before their first Thesis Advisory Panel (TAP) meeting. Confirmation of successful completion is required for MA/MSc by research students when the thesis is submitted for examination, and by MPhil, PhD and EngD students at the first formal review of progress (or, for pre-August 2016 entry MPhil and PhD students at thesis submission/confirmation of enrolment respectively). Students who have not completed the task will not be examined/considered for progression.

Academic misconduct

11.5 The University expects the highest standards of integrity from its research students and regards any form of academic misconduct as an extremely serious matter. Research students must not, by implication or otherwise represent the work of others as their own, represent work done in collaboration with others as their own unaided work, or present work for assessment which suggests that factual information has been collected which has not in fact been collected, or which falsifies factual information. All sources, whether published books or articles or unpublished material of any kind, must be explicitly acknowledged, and quotations or close paraphrases correctly attributed. The University has a procedure for dealing with academic misconduct by research students

(www.york.ac.uk/about/departments/support-and-admin/registry-services/academic-misconduct/), which contains an illustrative list of offences and penalties; penalties include termination of enrolment.

12 Assessment

Nature of the thesis

- 12.1 Assessment for the award of a research degree will normally be on the basis of a thesis, but with the approval of YGRSB the assessment for a specified programme may be on the basis of other materials arising from research. The assessment will be wholly on the basis of the thesis (or other materials prescribed for the programme concerned), and of an oral examination (viva voce), if required.
- 12.2 The length of a thesis (or the exact nature and extent of other materials prescribed for the programme concerned) shall be determined by the departmental Graduate School Board, taking into account the type and length of the programme and disciplinary norms, and shall be specified in the department's handbook for research degree students
- 12.3 A Graduate School Board may decide to permit research students within the department to submit a thesis comprising papers in referred journals (or similar), with an integrative chapter which summarises the aims, objectives, methodology, results and conclusions of all the work submitted, and explains how it forms a coherent body of work and makes an original contribution to knowledge or understanding. Where co-authored works are submitted, the candidate must provide a written statement, signed by the candidate and by the major contributory co-authors, specifying the candidate's individual contribution. This option for thesis presentation should not be confused with the PhD by Publication (see Regulation 2.9).
- 12.4 Research degree candidates are required to prepare and to submit for examination copies of their thesis as specified in the University's requirements (www.york.ac.uk/research/graduate-school/support/academic/thesis/). The copies of the thesis submitted for examination (or, following referral, for re-examination) remain the property of the University.

Examiner appointment

- 12.5 Examiners are appointed by the Standing Committee on Assessment, acting on behalf of Senate, on the nomination of the Graduate School Board concerned.
- 12.6 At least two, and not more than three, examiners, including at least one external examiner, shall be individually appointed for each candidate. Where three examiners are appointed, two shall be external examiners.
- 12.7 Any candidate for a research degree award who, at any time, during the five years prior to the date on which s/he submits his/her thesis for examination, has been an Academic, Research or Teaching member of staff (at grade 7 or above) of the University shall normally be examined by at least two, and not more than three, examiners, two of whom shall be external examiners. Exemptions from this requirement may only be made by the Standing Committee on Assessment on the recommendation of the Graduate School Board concerned. Where a second external examiner is required, the candidate shall, in this instance, be liable for the examiner's fee.

12.8 Where two external examiners are used, and there is no internal examiner, the department concerned should, in these circumstances, always provide an internal chair, who should be a member of academic staff in the relevant discipline (but not necessarily an expert on the subject of the thesis) other than the supervisor. The role of the chair is to oversee the process, and to confirm that the oral examination is conducted according to the University's policies and regulations.

Internal examiners

12.9 The roles of the supervisor and the examiner are quite separate and it is for this reason that the University has a policy that a candidate's supervisor(s) shall not be appointed as his/her internal examiner. A supervisor's main responsibility is to help the student to pursue his or her research and to present the results to best advantage. The role of the examiner is to determine whether the results so presented meet the academic standard required. Thus, when a student discusses with his/her supervisor(s) the submission of the thesis, any endorsement by the supervisor(s) of the intention to submit in no way prejudges the outcome of the subsequent assessment, which is entirely a matter for the examiners. The supervisor(s) may discuss with the candidate the purpose and possible nature of the oral examination, while making it clear that he/she is unable to predict how the examination will be conducted, or its outcome.

12.10 An internal examiner will normally be a member of the University's Academic, Research or Teaching staff, other than the candidate's supervisor(s). Retired members of the University's Academic, Research or Teaching staff may also be engaged to be internal examiners at the external examiner rate. Where two external examiners are used (see 12.8), one must be designated to fulfil the expectations normally assigned to the internal examiner.

The internal examiner must be able to make an independent academic judgement on the candidate's thesis. An internal examiner should not have had co-authoring or collaborative involvement in the candidate's current research project, and their work should not be the focus of the student's thesis. An internal examiner should not have served in quasi-supervisory role to the student concerned (see 8.16) and should not have advised on the final drafting of the student's thesis.

A member of the TAP (other than the supervisor(s)) or a member of a student's progression panel may be appointed as an internal examiner, providing that the afore-mentioned conditions are met. Any doubts about the perceived suitability of the internal examiner should be referred to the Head of the Research Student Administration Team.

External examiners

12.11 An external examiner will normally be a member of the academic staff of another higher education institution in the United Kingdom, or be of comparable academic standing. External examiners should have appropriate levels of expertise and experience, and the capacity to command authority and the respect of their colleagues in their particular field. Departments should provide a CV for each external examiner nominated. Where a nominee for appointment as external examiner is not a UK-based Professor or a Reader or of equivalent status, evidence should be provided that the nominee meets the foregoing criteria. An external examiner should not have had co-authoring or collaborative involvement in the candidate's work, and their work should not be the focus of the student's thesis.

12.12 Examiners should be independent, impartial and not have any known conflict of interest which might impinge on their role as external examiner, with reference to the current 'Guidance for the Appointment of External Examiners for Research Degrees' provided by the Standing Committee on Assessment. Where there is a question regarding potential conflicts, queries should be forwarded to the Dean of the YGRS. The same external examiner may be appointed to examine no more than two research degree candidates in the same department in any 12-month period, and no more than four research degree candidates in the same department in any 36-month period.

Former students or members of staff may not normally be nominated for appointment as an external examiner unless a period of five or more years has elapsed since they left the University. The candidate's supervisor or proposed internal examiner should not normally be appointed, currently or within the last six months, to examine a research student in the proposed external examiner's department. An external examiner for a taught degree may be nominated for appointment as an external examiner for a research degree.

12.13 For an MA/MSc by research programme, the Standing Committee on Assessment may approve a request from a department to retain a pool of external examiners over a specified period, who could examine individual students where they have appropriate expertise.

Poorly presented theses

12.14 In cases of exceptionally poor presentation, the examiners may jointly recommend that a thesis should be returned to the candidate for revision and resubmission prior to the oral examination. In such cases the examiners' advice to the candidate shall be limited to advice, in general terms, about the deficiencies in presentation (not the content of the thesis), and the candidate will be required to resubmit the thesis normally within one month. If the examiners receive for examination a thesis which either considers to be unacceptable on grounds of presentation, the examiners should consult in the first instance, and the internal examiner should consult with the Research Student Administration Team.

Requests for confidentiality

12.15 If a candidate requests that the content of his/her thesis should not be divulged publicly, the examiners should honour the request: this may be particularly important in the case of commercially-sponsored studentships and/or in the very rare cases where access to a thesis is to be restricted. In such cases the candidate may be asked to provide an abstract suitable for placing in the public domain.

Requirement for an oral examination

12.16 The requirement for an oral examination is as follows:

MPhil, PhD, EngD

(i) Every candidate for the MPhil, PhD or EngD degree is required to attend an oral examination on the subject of the thesis and on related matters. The oral examination forms an important part of the examination for the award of the degree; it is by no means simply a formality.

(ii) Very exceptionally, the Standing Committee on Assessment may grant exemption from the oral examination for an MPhil/PhD/EngD candidate on the recommendation of the examiners concerned where the thesis has met the requirements for the degree, but the candidate is permanently unable to present themselves for oral examination for medical or compassionate reasons. The examiners should always accompany their recommendation with a full explanation of the particular circumstances. The approval of the Committee for waiving the oral examination must be obtained before the examiners submit their joint report (see below). The oral examination may not be waived, except with the candidate's consent, in cases where the thesis fails to satisfy the examiners.

MA/MSc by research

(i) Candidates for the degrees of MA/MSc by research may be required, as a condition of their degree programme, to attend in person an oral examination on the subject of the thesis (or other materials submitted for examination) and on related matters. Where not required by the programme, an oral examination may nevertheless be required for an individual candidate, at the discretion of the examiners, in order to ensure that the work submitted for examination is the candidate's own or that the candidate meets the standard required for the degree. In both cases, the oral examination forms an important part of the examination for the award of the degree; it is by no means simply a formality.

(ii) Where the oral examination is a requirement of the MA/MSc by research degree programme, the Standing Committee on Assessment may, very exceptionally, grant exemption from the oral examination on the recommendation of the examiners concerned where the thesis has met the requirements for the degree, but the candidate is permanently unable to present themselves for oral examination for medical or compassionate reasons. The examiners should always accompany their recommendation with a full explanation of the particular circumstances. The approval of the Committee for waiving the oral examination must be obtained before the examiners submit their joint report (see below). The oral examination may not be waived, except with the candidate's consent, in cases where the thesis fails to satisfy the examiners.

(iii) If an oral examination is not a requirement of the MA/MSc by research programme, the department should specify what other procedures (for example, an internal presentation by the candidate with the internal examiner present) are used to verify that the work submitted for examination is the candidate's work.

The purpose of the oral examination

12.17 The purpose of the oral examination is to allow the examiners the opportunity to explore and to satisfy themselves regarding the areas listed in points below:

MPhil, PhD, EngD

(i) in the case of a PhD or EngD candidate, that the thesis represents a substantial original contribution to knowledge or understanding, and is worthy of publication, either in full or in an abridged form; or in the case of an MPhil candidate, that the thesis represents a recognizable original contribution to knowledge or understanding;

- (ii) that the candidate is well-acquainted with the general field of knowledge to which his/her research relates (the examiners should make a particular point of ensuring that the questions they ask at the oral examination serve to establish the candidate's wider background knowledge if this is not evident in the thesis);
- (iii) that there is evidence of training in, and the application of, appropriate research methods;
- (iv) that the work submitted is the candidate's own (or, if done in collaboration, that the candidate's share in the research is adequate);
- (v) that the mode of presentation is satisfactory.

MA/MSc by research

- (i) that the candidate has completed a piece of research commensurate with the period of study, including some original work;
- (ii) that the candidate has an adequate understanding of research methods;
- (iii) that the work submitted is the candidate's own (or, if done in collaboration, that the candidate's share in the research is adequate);
- (iv) that the mode of presentation is satisfactory.

12.18 The oral examination also allows the candidate an opportunity to respond to any shortcomings identified by the examiners.

12.19 Candidates are encouraged to access support in preparation for the oral examination. The RETT offers sessions on preparing for the oral examination and departments should also provide support, such as offering their research students the opportunity to undertake a mock oral examination.

The organisation of the oral examination

12.20 It is the responsibility of the internal examiner (or of the member of staff appointed as internal chair (see 12.8), if no internal examiner is appointed) to make arrangements for the oral examination.

12.21 The oral examination shall normally be held within three months of the date of submission of the thesis. Permission to hold the oral examination more than three months after this date must be obtained from the Standing Committee on Assessment. The internal examiner should agree the date of the oral examination in consultation with the external examiner(s) and the candidate.

12.22 The candidate, the external examiner(s) and the internal examiner (or chair) should all be present in person at the oral examination. In exceptional cases only, the Standing Committee on Assessment may grant permission for a candidate or an examiner to participate in the oral examination by video-conferencing.

12.23 The oral examination should normally be held at the University of York, but may be held elsewhere under arrangements approved in advance by the Standing Committee on Assessment. Any proposal to hold the oral examination elsewhere must have the approval of the external examiner(s), and the internal examiner (or chair) must provide the Committee with confirmation that he/she has obtained the candidate's consent. The examination should be held in premises appropriate to an oral examination.

12.24 Each examiner should prepare a preliminary report on the thesis, on the correct form, which reflects their independent academic judgement and which identifies the principal issues which they wish to raise in the oral examination. The preliminary reports should be brought to the oral examination and may be exchanged beforehand.

12.25 Before the oral examination the supervisor should ensure that the examiners are informed if the candidate needs specific arrangements to be put in place because of disability or exceptional stress or cultural differences. At the request of the candidate, and with the consent of the examiners, the supervisor or another member of academic staff approved by the Graduate School Board concerned may be present at the oral examination as a silent spectator.

12.26 In order to ensure that the oral examination is conducted fairly, the internal examiner should act as chair of the examination and shall ensure that it is conducted in accordance with this Policy. Where two external examiners are used, and there is no internal examiner, one examiner shall be asked to act as Chair, as well as being an examiner. The department concerned should, in these circumstances, always provide an internal chair, who should be a member of academic staff in the relevant discipline (but not necessarily an expert on the subject of the thesis) other than the supervisor. The internal chair should not intervene in the examination unless an exceptional situation arises. The internal chair shall submit a brief report on the conduct of the oral examination to the Standing Committee on Assessment.

12.27 Care should be taken to make the candidate feel at ease at the examination, especially if there is any issue of disability or exceptional stress. To this end, the layout of the examination room should be given careful thought. In addition, the examiners should consider, for example, starting with general comments or questions, or whether positive points can be made about the thesis. It is also important to give the candidate ample opportunity to talk about what he/she considers to be the strengths of the thesis.

12.28 Students should bring a copy of their thesis to the oral examination, and this may be annotated, but they should not bring any additional materials to the examination without the prior agreement of the internal and external examiners (to allow, for example, a candidate to demonstrate a computer simulation). No new material should be presented as part of the thesis at the oral examination.

Recording the oral examination

12.29 An audio-recording should be made of all oral examinations for research degrees, as a means of providing an objective record of the oral examination in the event of an appeal. The University makes appropriate equipment available to departments for this purpose. Recordings (usually on SD cards) will be stored centrally in a secure manner, and will be listened to only if an appeal is received from the candidate based on the conduct of the examination, or by an additional examiner subsequently appointed where the examiners have failed to agree between themselves whether or not the candidate has satisfied the requirements for a particular degree and the departmental Graduate School Board has been unable to resolve the disagreement (see below). Recordings will be destroyed one year after the final result of the examination has been confirmed by the Standing Committee on Assessment or, if an appeal is received, after consideration of the appeal within the University or subsequently by the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education has been concluded.

12.30 Each department is responsible for ensuring that an audio-recording is made of all oral examinations undertaken by research degree candidates, in accordance with the University's Policy on the audio-recording of oral examinations for research degrees (Appendix 1). These requirements are not waived for oral examinations conducted at distance (e.g. via Skype).

Examination outcomes

12.31 Following the (oral) examination of a candidate for a research degree, the following recommendations are open to the examiners:

For PhD and EngD candidates:

If the examiners agree that the candidate has satisfied the requirements for the degree concerned they may recommend:

- (i) that the degree should be awarded with no corrections; *OR*
- (ii) that the degree should be awarded subject to corrections to the thesis, to be completed within three months of the candidate receiving the list of corrections, to the satisfaction of the internal or another of the examiners; in making this recommendation, examiners should be assured that students can make any necessary corrections in the allotted time, notwithstanding any other commitments such as full-time employment.

If, however, the examiners agree that the candidate has not satisfied the requirements for the degree concerned they may recommend:

- (iii) that the candidate should be allowed a period not less than three months and not exceeding one year, from the date on which s/he received notification of the revisions to be made, in which to revise and resubmit the thesis for examination (referral); *OR*
- (iv) that the degree of MPhil should be awarded with no corrections to thesis; *OR*
- (v) that the degree of MPhil should be awarded subject to corrections to the thesis, to be completed within three months of the candidate receiving the list of corrections, to the satisfaction of the internal or another of the examiners; *OR*
- (vi) that the candidate should be allowed a period not less than three months and not exceeding one year, from the date on which s/he received notification of the revisions to be made, in which to revise and resubmit the thesis for examination for the degree of MPhil;
- (vii) that the degree of MA (by research) or MSc (by research), if offered by the department concerned, should be awarded with no corrections to thesis; *OR*
- (viii) that the degree of MA (by research) or MSc (by research), if offered by the department concerned, should be awarded subject to corrections to the thesis, to be completed within one month of the candidate receiving the list of corrections, to the satisfaction of the internal or another of the examiners; *OR*
- (ix) that no degree should be awarded.

Additionally, for EngD candidates:

- (x) that the degree of MSc should be awarded.

Note that the EngD also has Postgraduate Diploma and Postgraduate Certificate exit awards from the taught component of the programme.

For MPhil candidates:

If the examiners agree that the candidate has satisfied the requirements for the degree concerned they may recommend:

- (xi) that the degree should be awarded with no corrections; *OR*
- (xii) that the degree should be awarded subject to corrections to the thesis, to be completed within three months of the candidate receiving the list of corrections, to the satisfaction of the internal or another of the examiners;

if, however, the examiners agree that the candidate has not satisfied the requirements for the degree concerned they may recommend:

- (xiii) that the candidate should be allowed a period not less than three months and not exceeding one year, from the date on which s/he received notification of the revisions to be made, in which to revise and resubmit the thesis for examination (referral); *OR*
- (xiv) that the degree of MA (by research) or MSc (by research), if offered by the department concerned, should be awarded with no corrections to thesis; *OR*
- (xv) that the degree of MA (by research) or MSc (by research), if offered by the department concerned, should be awarded subject to corrections to the thesis, to be completed within one month of the candidate receiving the list of corrections, to the satisfaction of the internal or another of the examiners; *OR*
- (xvi) that no degree should be awarded.

For MA/MSc by research candidates:

If the examiners agree that the candidate has satisfied the requirements for the degree concerned they may recommend:

- (i) that the degree should be awarded with no corrections; *OR*
- (ii) that the degree should be awarded subject to corrections to the thesis, to be completed within one month of receiving the list of corrections, to the satisfaction of the internal or another of the examiners;

if, however, the examiners agree that the candidate has not satisfied the requirements for the degree concerned they may recommend:

- (iii) that the candidate should be allowed a period not exceeding three months, from the date on which s/he received notification of the revisions to be made, in which to revise and resubmit the thesis for examination (referral). A candidate will normally be given only one opportunity to revise and resubmit their thesis; *OR*
- (iv) that no degree should be awarded.

It should be noted that a mark-scale is not applicable to an MA/MSc by research, and the degree of MA/MSc by research may not be awarded with distinction or merit.

Examiners' reports

12.32 The examiners should submit a joint report on the appropriate form (www.york.ac.uk/about/departments/support-and-admin/registry-services/exams/examiners/) within two weeks of the oral examination. The report should conclude with a clear recommendation indicating whether or not the student has satisfied the requirements for the degree concerned.

12.33 The examiners' report should contain sufficient detail to enable the Standing Committee on Assessment to assess the scope and significance of the work contained in the thesis. In particular, it should give a brief description of the subject matter. The report should go on to contain specific statements about each of the matters listed in 12.17 above. The examiners' report form contains a separate section for comments on the oral examination (where applicable). The examiners should give a brief account of the length of the examination, the ground covered in it, and the level of the candidate's performance. If the examiners have had to use the oral examination to establish the candidate's wider background knowledge, this should be stated; and they should also give an indication of how well the candidate responded to the questions concerned.

12.34 If the examiners recommend that the degree should be awarded subject to corrections (where corrections means changes to the scholarly part of the thesis, including the correction of typographic errors, but not requiring major re-working or re-interpretation of the intellectual content of the thesis), a candidate must be notified in writing, normally by the internal examiner, of any corrections to be made to his/her thesis. Candidates will normally receive the list of corrections at, or shortly following, their oral examination (if applicable; normally within two weeks and no longer than 1 month). The final version of the corrected thesis must be received by the internal examiner (or another of the examiners) within three months of a PhD/EngD/MPhil candidate receiving the list of corrections or within one month of an MA/MSc by research candidate receiving the list of corrections. Any consultation between the candidate and the examiner about the direction or appropriateness of corrections must happen during this period: no further revisions can be made after submission of the final version of the corrected thesis. The examiner should consider the corrections and send a completed corrections approval form to the Research Student Administration Team within two weeks of receipt of the corrected thesis.

12.35 In any case where the examiners recommend that the candidate should be awarded a degree for which s/he was not enrolled (i.e. an MPhil or MA/MSc by research if a PhD or EngD candidate; an MA/MSc by research if an MPhil candidate), it is important that the examiners' report should include a clear and full statement as to why they are not prepared to recommend that the candidate should be given the opportunity to revise and resubmit the thesis. In such cases it may be open to the candidate to appeal against the examiners' recommendations on the grounds of unfair or improper conduct of the examination, or prejudice on the part of the examiners.

Consideration of the examiners' reports

12.36 The examiners' joint report should be submitted to the Chair of the departmental Graduate School Board in the department concerned for ratification as soon as possible, and in any case within two weeks of the date of the oral examination. Where no oral examination is held (for example, in the case of a candidate for the MA or MSc by research), the examiners' report should be submitted to

the department concerned as soon as possible and in any case within three months of the date of the submission of the thesis for examination.

- 12.37 After ratification, the examiners' joint report will be forwarded to the candidate, the supervisor and the Research Student Administration Team, where it will be approved by a member of the Standing Committee on Assessment, acting on behalf of the Committee. The Research Student Administration Team will also be provided with copies of all preliminary reports.
- 12.38 If the examiners recommend that the degree should be awarded, and following the completion, to the satisfaction of the internal or another of the examiners, of any corrections which the examiners may require, the candidate shall deposit copies of the thesis in accordance with the University's requirements (www.york.ac.uk/research/graduate-school/support/academic/thesis/). These copies of the thesis remain the property of the University.
- 12.39 The result of the examination will be formally communicated to the candidate by the Research Student Administration Team normally within two weeks of receipt of the examiners' report from the department concerned or within two weeks of the deposit by the candidate of copies of the thesis, whichever is the later.

Disagreement between examiners

- 12.40 In the rare cases where the examiners fail to agree between themselves whether or not a candidate has satisfied the requirements for a particular degree and the departmental Graduate School Board is unable to resolve the disagreement, the examiners should prepare individual reports for the consideration of the Graduate School Board which should forward them to the Standing Committee on Assessment together with a recommendation for the appointment of an additional external examiner. The additional external examiner will decide, on the basis of the other examiners' reports, of the thesis, and of the audio-recording of the oral examination (where available) whether or not the candidate has satisfied the requirements for the degree. The decision of the additional external examiner, which will be communicated by the University to the other examiners, will be final.

Revision and resubmission of the thesis

- 12.41 If the examiners agree that the candidate has not satisfied the requirements for the degree concerned and recommend that the thesis should be revised and resubmitted, the Research Student Administration Team will send an official letter of notification to the candidate (once the examiners' report has been received in the Research Student Administration Team and has been approved by the Standing Committee on Assessment). This letter will state, among other things, that the candidate's internal examiner or internal chair will provide him/her with written guidance as to the revisions needed to bring the thesis up to the required standard. It will also ask the candidate to get in touch with the Research Student Administration Team if he/she does not receive this written guidance.
- 12.42 Where a recommendation for the revision and resubmission of a thesis is made, the examiners should, within two weeks of the date of the oral examination, provide the candidate with advice in writing concerning the points which should be borne in mind by the candidate when revising the thesis.

12.43 The candidate should *not* expect to receive a mechanical list of revisions to be made, particularly when the revisions required involve major improvements in the depth, intellectual quality, analysis, argument or structure of the thesis.

12.44 The University expects that candidates will be given a fair and reasonable opportunity to revise the thesis to the required standard, whatever the circumstances of the resubmission. To this end, the candidate should be offered the opportunity of an initial meeting with the supervisor to discuss the examiners' requirements for revision. Thereafter, the need for further meetings will vary from case to case, according to, for example, the availability of the student and the extent of the revisions needed. The University accepts that there may be cases in which the student/supervisor relationship comes under strain as a result of the examiners' decision to refer the thesis; and in these cases it may be more appropriate, at the discretion of the Chair of the departmental Graduate School Board concerned, for another member of the department to take on responsibility for mediating feedback.

Examination following resubmission

12.45 The outcomes of the examination are the same recommendations as listed in 12.31 except that a candidate's thesis may only be revised and resubmitted on one occasion (i.e. that 12.31 (iii), (vi) and (xiii), and *MA/MSc by research* (iii) do not apply).

12.46 The candidate should submit two copies of the revised thesis to the Research Student Administration Team, and pay the prescribed re-examination fee.

12.47 The re-examination of a candidate following the revision and resubmission of the thesis will normally be conducted by the individuals who conducted the original examination. In exceptional circumstances (for example due to a substantial change in the health or employment circumstances of an examiner), a new examiner or examiners may need to be appointed by the Standing Committee on Assessment.

12.48 Where an examiner must be replaced between an initial examination and a re-examination of the thesis, the second examination will normally have the same status as any other re-examination. The new examiner should have access to the original examiners' reports in order to inform his/her assessment, but the primary measure of success should be the academic judgement of the examiners as to whether the standards of the award have been met, rather than whether the corrections outlined by the original examiner have been made. Exceptionally, where the examiners agree that the change of examiner may have resulted in conflicting views about the nature of appropriate corrections, they may recommend (to the Standing Committee on Assessment) a further referral of the thesis.

12.49 The decision as to whether or not to require a candidate to attend an oral examination following the revision and resubmission of a thesis is left to the discretion of the examiners. The decision should be made as soon as possible (and no later than one month) after the receipt of the revised thesis by the examiners. If an oral examination is held, it should be within three months of the resubmission of the revised thesis. Each examiner must submit an independent preliminary report on the resubmitted thesis, whether or not an oral examination is required.

12.50 Unless a further oral examination is held, the examiners' reports (i.e. the independent preliminary reports plus the joint report) on the revised thesis should be submitted to the chair of the

departmental Graduate School Board in the department concerned as soon as possible and in any case within three months of the date of the resubmission of the revised thesis for examination.

13 Dissemination of research results, intellectual property rights and responsibilities

13.1 Research students will be encouraged to make presentations on the results of their research in the University and at external meetings, and where appropriate to different audiences (e.g., academic peers, undergraduate students, school pupils). They should receive appropriate training for this purpose. Students should also be encouraged to submit work for publication during the course of their studies, where appropriate. Students are bound by the University's Policy on the publication of research, and authorship of publications should be decided in line with University policy on authorship.

13.2 All theses deposited by research students after examination, in printed and electronic form, will normally be available for consultation and for reproduction (as permitted in copyright law).

13.3 A thesis may be withheld or made available in redacted form for the following reasons:
(i) intent to publish; (ii) commercial sensitivity; (iii) data protection compliance; (iv) issues of national security (v) issues of health and safety; (vi) third-party copyright infringement, or; (vii) exemption under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Guidance on redaction and embargo issues is provided at [[library support web page](#)].

13.4 With the approval of their supervisor(s), and following all appropriate considerations, including any potential intellectual property issues and with reference to [Research Data Management expectations](#) and guidelines, a student may request to deposit a thesis with accompanying redactions or embargo as follows:
(i) A redacted version of the thesis may be deposited for the electronic archive, with the examined copy held by the university. Redaction for third-party copyright infringement will be indefinite unless notification of clearance is received.
(ii) The student is ultimately responsible for any redaction of the thesis.
(iii) Access to the thesis may be withheld, and, with the exception of an abstract, none of the material contained in it should be reproduced, for a fixed period agreed with the supervisor(s), and commencing from the date on which the printed copy of the examined thesis is deposited with the Research Student Administration Team after the examination.
(iv) If dispute arises between student and supervisor(s) relating to withholding the thesis, the decision of the supervisor(s) is final.
(v) An extension to a withholding period, on request by student or supervisor(s) to their Faculty, may be granted in accordance with University guidelines.
(vi) Lifting an embargo in advance of the set date may only be done with the consent of both student and supervisor(s).

13.5 Except by formal agreement between the research student and an external organisation, copyright in the research thesis is owned by the student (although theses shall be available for consultation and for reproduction, subject to acknowledgement, and dependent on any limitation of access agreed as above). In many cases, however, other forms of intellectual property arising from the thesis, including patentable inventions and software, may be subject to contractual conditions, for example with sponsors of the research, which may require ownership to be vested in a third party or in the University. Furthermore, in many instances, intellectual property is jointly conceived by a

student together with his or her supervisor(s) or with other colleagues in the same research group. In such cases, the University would expect to own such IPR but would share any benefits accruing from its exploitation with the student according to the University's Intellectual Property Regulation ([Regulation 12](#)).

13.6 Where the studentship is sponsored by a commercial or other external organisation, such as RCUK, to which the University owes contractual responsibilities, the supervisor will ensure that the research student receives and, where appropriate, signs a copy of the contract covering the research.

14 Research student complaints and appeals

14.1 The University has a complaints procedure (www.york.ac.uk/students/help/appeals/) for dealing with complaints of an academic and non-academic nature from research students and others. There is a separate procedure for dealing with complaints relating to harassment of any kind (www.york.ac.uk/admin/eo/Harassment/).

14.2 Research students may appeal if, following examination, they fail to achieve the qualification sought, or in a number of other circumstances concerning their academic progression set out in Regulation 2.8 (www.york.ac.uk/about/organisation/governance/governance-documents/ordinances-and-regulations/regulation-2/). Responsibility for considering appeals has been delegated by the Senate to the Special Cases Committee (www.york.ac.uk/students/help/appeals/).

15 Academic input from other institutions for individual students, including outgoing and incoming visiting students (see section 16 for collaborative research degree programmes and section 17 for Doctoral Training Centre programmes)

15.1 An individual student enrolled for a research degree programme at York may, with the approval of the departmental Graduate School Board concerned, receive academic input from another institution (not involving enrolment as a student at that institution), in the form of training, taught courses, additional supervision, or external membership of the Thesis Advisory Panel. Any financial implications are the responsibility of the department concerned. Responsibility for monitoring such arrangements lies with the departmental Graduate School Board.

15.2 An individual student enrolled for a research degree programme at York may enrol as a visiting student at another academic institution for a limited period, as part of the York programme. Such students will not be awarded a qualification by the other institution. They will maintain their enrolment at York and (unless specific alternative arrangements are agreed by the University) will continue to pay tuition fees at York during this period (normally up to twelve months for a full-time PhD student, nine months for a full-time MPhil student or six months for a full-time MA/MSc by research student or equivalent periods for part-time students). Approval of such arrangements must be given by departmental Graduate School Boards. Students must remain under the general supervision of their supervisor at York and appropriate arrangements must be made for Thesis Advisory Panel meetings, research training and participation in other academic activities. Formal supervisory meetings (see 5.12) may be held by video-conferencing rather than face-to-face during this period. A decision on progression (if applicable) must be taken by the deadline specified in the Policy on Research Degrees, and any standard attendance requirements of the department relating

to this process must be met as normal unless permission is sought from the Head of RSAT for the use of video-conferencing.

15.3 An individual student enrolled at another academic institution may enrol as a visiting research student at York, normally for a maximum period of twelve months. Applications must be made through the standard channels, and be considered by departments in the normal way. As a condition of admission, applicants must meet the University's normal admission requirements, including at least the University's minimum English language proficiency requirement. Unless specific alternative arrangements are agreed by the University (e.g., under an Erasmus scheme), visiting students pay tuition fees at York pro rata to their period of study. Visiting students are not eligible for the award of any qualification from York.

16 Collaborative research degree programmes (see section 17 for Doctoral Training Centre programmes)

16.1 The University recognises that there are circumstances in which the value of a research degree programme may be enhanced through collaboration with another academic institution. Senate approval must be sought for any collaborative programmes.

Dual and joint PhD programmes

16.2 Where strategically justified, the University may collaborate with other, mainly international, universities to offer dual and joint PhD programmes. The rules that govern a dual or joint PhD programme (e.g. in terms of selection, admission, induction, supervision, progress and review arrangements, training, and assessment) will normally be negotiated between the institutions, so that the minimum requirements of both can be met. When considering a dual or joint PhD programme, YGRSB will need to give approval to any exceptions to the University's Policy on Research Degrees and will only do this where there is good reason and when the Board can be assured that the standard of the PhD and the quality of the student experience will not be compromised.

Collaborative programmes leading to a University of York award

16.3 A departmental Graduate School Board may propose to YGRSB a research degree programme leading to a qualification of the University of York in which there is a requirement for a period of study (normally up to twelve months for a full-time PhD student, nine months for a full-time MPhil student or six months for a full-time MA/MSc by research student, or equivalent periods for part-time students) involving enrolment at another specified academic institution (or institutions) and/or there is a requirement for academic input from another institution (or institutions) (but not involving enrolment as a student at that institution), in the form of training, credit-bearing modules, additional supervision or external membership of Thesis Advisory Panels.

16.4 Where credit-bearing modules are taken at a partner institution in accordance with 15.2 above, the partner institution will be expected to provide a transcript for the students and the result will be recorded on the students' records at York as recognition of prior learning.

17 Doctoral Training Centre programmes

- 17.1 York students in a Doctoral Training Centre consortium may be required to undertake a period of study at another consortium university and/or receive academic input from another consortium university (or universities) in the form of training, credit-bearing modules, additional supervision or external membership of Thesis Advisory Panels.
- 17.2 Conversely, students from another university in a CDT or DTP consortium that includes York may be required to undertake a period of study at York and/or receive academic input from York in the form of training, credit-bearing modules, additional supervision or external membership of Thesis Advisory Panels. To formalise this arrangement, and enable the students to access necessary York-based resources, York will maintain shadow student records for these individuals.

This Policy applies to all students who commenced a research degree programme after October 2013. The Policy also applies to research students who commenced a research degree programme before October 2013, with the exception that changes to the composition of existing supervisory teams and/or Thesis Advisory Panels are not required if the department believes that this would not be in the best interests of the students concerned.

This Policy is based on the former Code of practice on research degrees. It should be noted that most of the differences between the two policy documents are minor (arising from presentational changes, updating and consolidation of information, codifying existing good practice and clarifying areas of ambiguity).

Appendix 1: Guidance on the Meeting of Thesis Advisory Panel (TAP) Form

This standardised form for the recording of Thesis Advisory Panels has been created to achieve a number of outcomes including:

- To give students a tool to help them reflect on, and be analytical of, their academic and personal progress, in preparation for meetings of their TAP
- To guarantee students honest and constructive feedback on their progress from their TAP
- To give students an opportunity to express praise or concern regarding the nature of their supervisory relationship in a confidential but potentially constructive manner
- To ensure that students and TAPs are meeting their obligations under the QAA Quality Code and the University of York Policy on Research Degrees

The standard University TAP form (online in SkillsForge from October 2016), together with the Review of Supervision form, is designed to assist students and departments to reflect on progress and to meet their reporting requirements.

Departments may set their own practices with regards to TAP meetings (e.g. timing, structure, membership, the scheduling of meetings, etc.), so long as the minimum requirements in Section 8 of the Policy on Research Degrees are met.

Section A must be completed by the student prior to the meeting.

Section B must be completed by the supervisor prior to the meeting.

Section C must be completed by the members of the TAP. This can be done either in the meeting with input by the student or as a reflection of the students' progress recorded after the meeting. The student *must and will* have access to the responses contained in this section in order to ensure feedback on their progress and to inform the next steps in their research.

The TAP form will be stored in SkillsForge; TAP members are responsible for final sign-off and submission.

The *Review of Supervision* form will be completed by the student without the presence or input of the supervisor. The form will not normally be seen by the supervisor, and must be stored separately to the other sections of the form. The *Review of Supervision* form may not be shown to the supervisor, and the contents of it may not be discussed with the supervisor without the permission of the student.

An independent (non-supervisory) member of the TAP should discuss the form with the student, offering the student an opportunity to provide feedback on their supervisory relationship in a safe environment. If any concerns about the supervisory arrangements are raised by the student during this part of the meeting, it is the role of the TAP member to discuss possible solutions with the student.

Completed *Review of Supervision* forms must be forwarded to the Graduate Chair (or equivalent) via the departmental graduate administrator. The student will indicate on the form whether they wish any concerns they may raise to be discussed with the supervisor.

Concerns should be managed sensitively by the Graduate Chair, and with due impartiality. Students should be aware that though the department has a responsibility to take complaints and concerns seriously, the documentation and potential investigation of concerns does not denote any institutional or personal acceptance of the veracity or appropriateness of the concern.

If the student does not express any concerns, or requests that their supervisor not be informed of any concerns they have reported, they cannot reasonably expect any action to be taken by the department in order to improve the situation.

Reports recorded in Skillsforge will be routinely checked for the timeliness of TAP meetings, and may be used by the RSAT or Quality Assurance Office in order to ensure that the University are meeting their statutory obligations and duty of care to the students.

Appendix 2: Policy on the audio-recording of oral examinations for research degrees

Purpose of the recording

- 1) The audio recording provides an objective record of the oral examination that can be used (i) in the event of an appeal (see below), or (ii) in the event that the examiners have failed to agree between themselves whether or not the candidate has satisfied the requirements for a particular degree and the departmental Graduate School Board has been unable to resolve the disagreement. In the latter case, the recording will be heard by the subsequently appointed adjudicating examiner. The recording will not be copied or replayed except in situations (i) and (ii) above, which are the sole purposes for which the recording is made. The University's understanding of the position in relation to statutory disclosure is set out below.

Responsibility for recordings

- 2) Graduate School Boards shall ensure that all oral examinations for which they are responsible are audio-recorded, or, in the exceptional cases detailed below, that permission from the Standing Committee on Assessment is obtained for the use of an internal observer. To ensure availability of equipment, a diary should be kept by each Graduate School Board of all prospective oral examinations for which they are responsible. Only the official audio-recording is permitted; participants in the oral examination are not permitted to make their own audio-recordings.

Notification of external examiners and students

- 3) Graduate School Boards are asked to inform external examiners prior to nomination that the oral examination will be recorded and to confirm their assent on the Appointment of Examiners form. Prospective external examiners should be notified that the recordings will be held and treated in confidence. If a prospective external examiner refuses to give assent and there is no other suitable examiner available, then the Chair of the Graduate School Board must seek permission from the Standing Committee on Assessment for an independent observer to attend the oral examination (see below).
- 4) Graduate School Boards are asked to ensure that their research students are aware that oral examinations will be recorded and understand the reasons for this. Students should be notified that the recordings will be held and treated in confidence. Students will be reminded by the Research Student Administration Team, when they submit their soft bound thesis, that the oral examination will be recorded.

Equipment

- 5) The audio recording will be made using equipment authorised for this purpose by the Standing Committee on Assessment. The University's Audio Visual Centre will maintain a stock of the approved equipment, which should be booked in advance by departments. Memory cards, which will be required for the recording and will have the status of an examination script, will be sent to MPhil/PhD/EngD internal examiners/observers when theses are sent out for examination. Internal examiners of MA/MSc by research candidates must collect the memory card from the Research Student Administration Team. If the recording fails at any time during the examination, the oral examination should continue unrecorded and the Research Student Administration Team should be informed as soon as possible.

Recording the examination

- 6) The department is responsible for ensuring that a designated person is available before the start of the examination to assist examiners with recording equipment. Before the examination, the designated person should enter the student's name and student number and the date of the examination on the cover of the audio-disk.
- 7) The internal examiner (or, in cases where there are two external examiners and no internal examiner, the internal observer) will inform those present at the start of the examination that the recording equipment is being switched on, and at the end of the examination that it is being switched off. The recording should end when the oral examination is complete, and the candidate leaves the examination room prior to the private discussion of the examiners. Neither the private discussion of the examiners, nor any subsequent discussion between the candidate and the examiners, should be recorded. The subsequent discussion between the examiners, and any subsequent discussion between the examiners and the student, should not be recorded.
- 8) After the oral examination, the audio-disk should be removed from the equipment by the designated person and delivered by hand by the designated person or a departmental official to the Research Student Administration Team for secure storage. No copy of the recording should be made, nor should it be listened to in the department.

Storage of recordings

- 9) The recording will be stored securely by the Assistant Registrar: Student Progress. It will be erased one year after the final result of the examination has been confirmed by the Standing Committee on Assessment, or, if an appeal is received, after consideration of the appeal within the University or subsequently by the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education has been concluded. Receipt and erasure of recordings will be documented.

Status of the recordings under the Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information Act

- 10) The audio recording has the status of examination script and is therefore exempt from subject access requests under the Data Protection Act (the Act does not restrict the media that can constitute an

exam script). However, this exemption does not extend to the examiners' comments on the candidate's performance, or any other form of feedback or conversation beyond the requirements of the examination. Provided these are not recorded, the recordings are exempt from data requests by the student. The recording cannot be released to a third party under the Freedom of Information Act because it holds the candidate's personal data, the wider disclosure of which is likely to be unfair and contrary to the purposes for which the data were obtained (see above).

Use of the recording in the event of appeal

11) Grounds for appeal:

- i. Students may not appeal against the academic judgement of examiners;
- ii. Students may appeal against a decision reached as a consequence of assessment if they believe that a procedural irregularity has occurred, or that the assessment was conducted unfairly or improperly; or if, for good reason, relevant mitigating circumstances can be shown which could not reasonably have been brought to the attention of the examiners before a decision on the student's academic performance was reached.

12) Procedure for consideration of appeals:

- i. In considering an appeal the Chair of the Special Cases Committee may request information from the academic department concerned or other relevant parties concerning any matter raised by the appellant. The audio-recording may form part of the evidence considered by the Chair. The recording will not be released to the student or any other party as a means to preparing an appeal;
- ii. The Chair may ask the Graduate School Board concerned if, in the light of the evidence presented by the appellant, it is prepared to reconsider its recommendation or decision and the Board may agree to do so. The appellant will retain the right to appeal against a subsequent recommendation or decision;
- iii. The Chair will give reasons for any decision that an appeal should not be heard;
- iv. If the Chair decides, wholly or partly on the evidence of the audio-recording, that the appeal should be heard, a copy of the audio-recording or, at the Chair's discretion, of relevant parts, shall be made available to the members of the panel, the appellant and the other participants in the hearing.

Exceptional use of an independent observer in place of an audio recording

13) The circumstances in which permission may be sought to employ an independent observer in place of an audio recording are:

- i. if an External Examiner refuses to give assent to audio-recording and there is no other suitable examiner available;
- ii. if audio-recording would present a candidate with difficulties on medical or psychological grounds.

- 14) In these circumstances, the Chair of the Graduate School Board must seek permission from the Standing Committee on Assessment for an independent observer to attend the oral examination, supplying appropriate documentation from a medical practitioner or counsellor in case (ii). The Chair of the Graduate School Board shall nominate the proposed observer on the form for the appointment of examiners.
- 15) The independent observer should be an academic member of University staff in the candidate's discipline or a related area, but need not be an expert on the subject of the thesis. The student's supervisor cannot fulfill this role. The observer will submit a brief report to the Standing Committee on Assessment on the conduct of the oral examination, noting the main subjects discussed and any areas of concern voiced by the examiners. They must be prepared to provide an independent viewpoint on the oral examination should there be an appeal based on its conduct. In the event of an appeal, the observer's report will be made available to the Chair of the Special Cases Committee. If the Chair decides that the appeal should be heard, the observer's report will be made available to the members of the panel, the appellant and the other participants in the hearing. The observer should not intervene during the oral examination unless an exceptional situation should arise.
- 16) It is essential that these arrangements are made well in advance of the oral examination and conveyed to the candidate and examiners.

Appendix 3: Policy Framework for Distance Learning PhDs

The Policy Framework for Distance Learning PhDs applies to distance learning PhD students. Where there is inconsistency between the Policy on Research Degrees and this framework for distance learning PhD students, the Policy Framework for Distance Learning PhDs applies.

Policy Framework for Distance Learning PhDs

Introduction:

1. This paper sets out a policy framework for PhDs by distance learning. It should be read in conjunction with the University's [Policy on Research Degrees](#) and with the University's [Regulations for Research Degree Awards](#) (Regulation 2).
2. All PhDs by distance learning require approval by the YGRSB. Approval will be conducted with reference to the factors listed below.
3. References to Board of Studies below include departmental Graduate School Boards, where these operate under delegated powers from Boards of Studies.

Admission:

Principles:

4. Studying for a PhD by distance learning presents both unique opportunities and unique challenges. At admission, departments should carefully consider, and discuss with the applicant, whether it

would be appropriate for the student to register on a PhD by distance learning as opposed to a standard, campus-based full-time or part-time PhD.

5. As guidance, PhDs by distance learning are most likely to be suitable where:
 - a. the student has particular research interests which lend themselves to study conducted primarily at a distance (for instance, a work-based project or one requiring extensive field work);
 - b. resources and facilities needed for the student's research project are available locally to the student or electronically / online;
 - c. the student can dedicate the necessary time both for their PhD study and to meet the visit requirements (listed below).
 - d. the student has the necessary self-motivation to succeed in independent study with minimal informal face-to-face support;
 - e. the student has personal or professional circumstances which prevent study in standard mode but allow study in distance-learning mode.
6. Departments should make clear to all applicants, both in published information and in conversation, the limits imposed by distance-learning PhD study: for instance, that supervision will primarily be via video-conferencing; the limited access to central / departmental on-site resources and training; additional costs of visas (if appropriate), travel and accommodation for visits to York; and the limits placed on their professional development as academics from lack of availability of teaching opportunities.

Requirements:

7. The admissions requirements (for instance, English language requirements and prior qualifications) and admissions procedure for PhDs by distance-learning are the same as for other PhDs, with the following exception. All decisions for admission to PhDs by distance learning should be taken through evaluation of the factors listed on the following checklist, to be assessed through discussion with the applicant:
 - That there are good reasons for applying to the distance-learning as opposed to standard PhD
 - That the applicant has sufficient time available to engage in formal and informal supervision, and that time-differences between them and the supervisor will not inhibit this
 - That the proposed supervisor is willing and able to undertake supervision remotely
 - That the applicant has appropriate study space available to them
 - That the applicant's research project can be conducted through learning resources and facilities which are available to the applicant locally and/or online, and that on-site resources or specialist facilities will be only minimally required
 - That the applicant has appropriate internet connectivity, software and hardware to support research and video-conferencing, or that such will be provided by the Department
 - That it is feasible for the applicant to engage in the Department's research community (taking into account infrastructure, logistics, time-differences)
 - That the applicant will be able to engage in required departmental training
 - That, taking into account the factors in the checklist and any local opportunities available to the applicant, that the Department and applicant are confident that it will be possible to meet the applicant's individual training and development needs

In addition to being discussed with the applicant, awareness of the following factors will also be assured via inclusion in the offer letter:

- That there needs to be sufficient time available to conduct their research throughout the duration of their programme
- That there are on-campus visit requirements which the applicant must organise and fund themselves
- That supervision will primarily be by video conferencing
- That there will be limited availability of / access to central training / on-site departmental training
- That paid teaching opportunities will necessarily be highly restricted, and will not be available at all for students who do not have the legal right to work in the UK.
- That as a distance learning student they may have limited ability to take advantage of Department funds for conference attendance
- That continued enrolment depends on their ability to secure short-term visitor visas for each block of visits on the programme, and that these visas cannot be guaranteed by the University.

8. Transfers from distance-learning PhDs to on-campus PhDs are possible, subject to consideration by the Board of Studies and other factors such as whether the student meets UKVI requirements (in the case of international students). Transfers from on-campus PhDs to distance-learning PhDs are likewise possible, subject to consideration by the relevant Board of Studies, which should evaluate the factors above as per a new applicant.

Attendance Requirements:

9. Students on PhDs by distance learning will be required to periodically visit the University. Visits will be used to support the students' research and academic development, integration into their department's research community, and their professional development. Expectations as to what students will do and achieve whilst visiting the University will be agreed between the student and supervisor in each instance, in sufficient time to allow the student to appropriately prepare for the visit.

10. The following visit requirements will apply for all such students (with no distinction between full- and part-time students):

- a. a two-week visit at the start of their programme to support induction;
- b. visit(s) comprising at least two weeks in each academic year to be held either as two week-long visits or a single fortnight-long visit, as agreed between the supervisor and student and to be held within a specified window;
- c. visits to coincide with formal reviews of progress (see below) and final oral examination (see below), which it is intended will overlap with the visits in b. above.

11. The pattern (but not necessarily precise timings) of visits will be agreed prior to admission and at the start of each academic year. For international students, this will be conducted in sufficient time as necessary to meet applications for visas. The timing of visits will take account of constraints imposed by visa regulations (see below).

12. Students whose circumstances leave them unable to meet the visit requirements will be required to seek an exemption from Special Cases Committee via application to their Graduate School Board. Students who miss visit requirements without such approval will be placed on a formal warning that

their enrolment is at risk (after the first missed visit), and ultimately have their enrolment terminated (after the second missed visit).

13. International students on a distance-learning programme will be required to apply for a short-term study visa to meet visit requirements. Under current regulations, short-term study visas allow short periods of study in the UK of no more than six months in length, totalling no more than six months in a twelve month period. In practical terms, this means that visits within an academic year need to take place within a specified six-month window, and the student cannot then visit the University for a further six months after the end of this window. UKVI have additional specific requirements as to what applicants are required to demonstrate to obtain a visa, and it is the student's responsibility to meet these requirements.

A new visa is required for each six-month visit window, and the student will need to apply and pay for a new visa each time. There is no overarching eligibility for short-term study visas across the lifetime of the programme. The University accordingly cannot guarantee that a student will be able to obtain a short-term study visa at each application. In the event that a student is unable to meet the visitation or progression requirements due to UKVI restrictions or the denial of a visa, they are likely to be required to apply for a Leave of Absence until the situation can be resolved. This would be subject to the University's standard limits for leave of absence.

14. International students will be provided with appropriate documentation from the University to support applications for short-term study visas.
15. The University will not provide funding for the cost of visas, travel and accommodation for visits: these additional costs do not form part of the student's tuition fees, and will need to be met by the student or their funder. The University will not be responsible for organising or providing travel or accommodation arrangements for visits. Students will be advised of the necessity of planning for, and funding, visits at application.

Induction and Handbooks:

16. In addition to attending the departmental induction for new research students, new students on PhDs by distance learning should also receive a separate departmental induction addressing their needs. This should encompass discussion of the pattern of informal engagement and formal visits, the implications of study in distance-learning mode such as the need for regular communication and good planning time-management, and means for the student to engage in the Department's research community. Departments should also ensure that students on PhDs by distance learning receive specific guidance regarding supervisory arrangements, access to facilities and resources during and outside visits and training opportunities.
17. All new PhD students are expected to attend the YGRS central induction session and to make use of the supplementary online induction resource 'Becoming an Effective Researcher' tutorial (BERT). It is permissible for distance learning students to complete the work in the online resources as opposed to attending in person. Graduate School Boards are responsible for ensuring that students either attend the central induction or complete these resources.
18. All students on PhDs by distance learning should receive a handbook in hardcopy or online. This should be a specific handbook (for instance, a tailored version of the standard departmental

handbook) rather than simply the standard handbook for PhD students. Departments are responsible for producing this handbook. This will require departments to consider information in standard handbooks from the perspective of distance-learning students and amend / add as appropriate.

Period of Enrolment:

19. The period of enrolment for students on PhDs by distance learning will be the same as that for students on other PhDs, as set out in the Policy on Research Degrees.

Supervision and Staffing:

20. The formal supervision requirements set out in the University's Policy on Research Degrees will apply to students on PhDs by distance learning.
21. The purpose and likely frequency of informal supervision meetings / contact should be made clear for the research student by their supervisor, at induction and within handbooks. Departments are strongly encouraged to ensure that some form of informal contact between the student and supervisor (e.g. an e-mail) occurs at least monthly.
22. Supervision meetings (whether formal or informal) will normally take place by video-conferencing, if they do not coincide with the student's formal visits to York. Students on distance-learning PhDs who are resident in the UK should nevertheless expect to receive supervision remotely: a standard PhD may thus be more appropriate for those students who prefer face-to-face meetings with their supervisor.
23. It is strongly recommended that departments with PhDs by distance learning appoint a programme director to oversee and manage the programme. This post can be (but does not have to be) filled by the Chair of the departmental Graduate School Board.

Progress and Assessment:

24. Thesis Advisory Panels (TAPs) may take place by video-conferencing if they do not coincide with the student's visits to York. Departments have discretion to devote visits to other work and preparation for TAPs rather than TAPs themselves.
25. Attendance at York for formal reviews of progress should follow standard departmental procedures, unless an alternative is approved by the YGRSB. If, within a department, students are expected, as a matter of course, to be present in person at progress review meetings this should apply equally to students on distance-learning PhDs. If, within a department, students are not expected, as a matter of course, to be present in person at progress review meetings, students should be present at any 'enhanced' TAP meeting that takes place prior to the progress review meeting (and if the progression panel does not feel able to recommend that a student be progressed a progress review meeting must be held by video-conferencing). Where a student cannot be physically present at a progress review meeting/enhanced TAP meeting as required by the department, permission must be sought from the Head of RSAT for the student to participate by video- conferencing. In the event of the student failing progression at the first attempt and requiring a second progress review meeting, it is permissible for this to be held via video-conferencing, provided that the technology used is compatible with the need to audio-record the panel proceedings (for instance, Google Hangout). When formal meetings with

students (e.g. progress review meetings/TAP meetings) are held by video-conferencing, the rooms used by both the student and panel members should be appropriate for the purpose (for instance, avoiding the likelihood of interruptions that would interfere with the proceedings).

26. The oral examination for final assessment of the student's thesis ('the viva') will normally be held in a face-to-face meeting in York. In exceptional circumstances only, the oral examination may be held via video-conferencing if approved in advance by Standing Committee on Assessment. Any proposal to hold the oral examination by video-conferencing must have the approval of the external examiner, and the internal examiner (or observer) must provide the Committee with confirmation that they have obtained the candidate's consent. The rooms used by both the student and the examination panel should be appropriate to an oral examination (for instance, avoiding interruptions or noise that would interfere with proceedings), and appropriate technology should be used to allow a recording of the proceedings (for instance, Google Hangout). These arrangements also apply in the event of an examination being required upon resubmission of a thesis.

Title:

27. All PhDs by distance learning will carry a standard form of title: 'PhD in X by distance learning'. It is necessary for the programme to be clearly identifiable as distance learning to support applications for short-term study visas. However, students will exit with the same qualification as students doing an equivalent PhD in standard mode (i.e. there will be no distinction in the qualification), as the criteria for the qualification are the same.

Facilities and Resources:

28. Students on distance-learning PhDs will have access to the University's / department's on-site facilities and resources during formal visits to York. Outside of these visits, access will necessarily be limited to electronic and online resources (such as e-books and e-journals). Distance-learning PhD study is most likely to be appropriate for students who have particular interests where resources / facilities are available locally to support their research, or where their research can be conducted primarily via online resources. Departments should ensure that students have access to the resources necessary to their study (taking into constraints on access to on-site resources and any local resources) at admission, and monitor this throughout the student's programme.

Research Community:

29. The University is committed to ensuring that all research students benefit from a supportive research community. This presents a challenge for students studying at a distance: departments should demonstrate how they will overcome that challenge in cases for approval of PhDs by distance learning. Departments are encouraged to:

- Facilitate remote participation in research seminars and other research-related events (requiring consideration of infrastructure, time-differences, the outside commitments of students on PhDs by distance learning);
- Encourage students on PhDs by distance learning to attend relevant research events during their visits to York, and consider timing visits / events to coincide with one another to support this;
- Facilitate the ability of students on PhDs by distance-learning to give presentations / papers in the department, either in person on visits or remotely;

- Establish a staff-led online community for PhD students;
- Encourage communication between distance-learning PhD students and other PhD students, by e-mail or social networking;
- Consider recording research seminars and other research-related events.

Training and Development:

30. Students will have access to on-site central and departmental training during their visits to York: as such, access to this training will necessarily be limited. Departments should take proactive steps to make departmental training available to students on PhDs by distance learning. This might involve, for instance, recording training sessions; development of online resources or workbooks; bespoke sessions; remote participation in training sessions (this is strongly encouraged, but departments should note there may be difficulties in arranging it due to logistical problems and time-differences).
31. Departments should demonstrate how training will be provided to students in the case for approval of PhDs by distance learning.
32. Departments should consider the situation of distance-learning PhD students in their procedure for allocating funds for conference attendance, and make clear how the procedure applies to such students.
33. Access to paid teaching and demonstrating opportunities for students on PhDs by distance-learning will necessarily be very limited, as such teaching requires on-site attendance: such opportunities will not be available to students who do not have the right to work in the UK. Departments are, however, encouraged to consider if it is feasible to support this aspect of students' development in other ways (for instance by allowing students to observe teaching sessions during visits).
34. Students on distance-learning PhDs should expect to receive the majority of their training through electronic resources rather than onsite / face-to-face. Students who require greater on-site training and development than is available within distance-learning PhDs may be encouraged to transfer to study in standard on-site mode, where this is feasible.

Student Representation and Engagement:

35. Students on distance-learning PhDs should be included in departmental and University mechanisms for student representation and engagement, as per other PhD students.

Monitoring and Review:

36. Departments should carefully monitor the progress and outcomes for distance-learning PhD students. The effectiveness of PhDs by distance-learning should be specifically considered as part of the Annual Programme Review (APR) process. All PhDs by distance learning will be subject to a review by the University three years after approval, in addition to being reviewed as part of the standard Periodic Review process.

Appendix 4: Policy on PhD/EngD and MPhil Student Progression

Where there is any inconsistency between the Policy on Research Degrees and this Policy in relation to formal reviews of progress, this Policy applies.

Formal reviews of progress: purpose

- 1.1 A student is admitted to a PhD, EngD or MPhil programme on the basis of an assessment of their potential at the admissions stage. Remaining on the PhD, EngD or MPhil programme is conditional on the student making satisfactory progress with respect to their research project and the other elements of their programme.
- 1.2 The purpose of formal reviews of progress is to ensure that students on PhD, EngD and MPhil programmes are making satisfactory progress. A formal review of progress should give a PhD, EngD or MPhil student a clear sense of the progress they are making, providing reassurance for those who are performing to or beyond expectations and providing a means by which those who are underperforming can be identified in a timely manner and given the advice and support they need to address the situation.
- 1.3 The University's approach to progression (which is aligned with national expectations and sector norms), aims to ensure that students are treated fairly and equitably, whilst respecting disciplinary differences.

Formal reviews of progress: key elements

- 1.4 Formal reviews of progress take place on an annual basis for full-time PhD, EngD and MPhil students (towards the end of a student's academic year) and on a biennial basis for part-time PhD and MPhil students.
- 1.5 Formal reviews of progress are not required for **entry into a continuation period**, where this is permitted. This means that a student on a three-year PhD programme (and part-time equivalent) will have two formal reviews of progress, a student on a four-year PhD or EngD programme (and part-time equivalent) will have three formal reviews of progress, and a student on an MPhil programme will have a single formal review of progress.
- 1.6 In a formal review of progress, a PhD, EngD or MPhil student is assessed against the relevant **University progression criteria** by a **progression panel**. The progression panel is independent of the student's supervisor(s) to gain an external perspective on the progress that a student is making, and to ensure that the supervisor's relationship with the student is developmental, rather than judgemental.
- 1.7 Students are permitted a maximum of two opportunities to meet the relevant University progression criteria at each formal review of progress. If a student has not met the relevant

University progression criteria after two attempts they will be deemed to have failed the progression point and they will be transferred to an alternative programme or have their enrolment will be terminated.

Overview of the process

- 1.8 The **timing of formal reviews of progress** is determined by departments, within parameters set by the University.
- 1.9 Departments determine what **evidence** (written and oral) PhD, EngD and MPhil students should provide to demonstrate that they have met the relevant University progression criteria. Evidence from the student is considered alongside the **supervisor's report** on the student's progress and, where required by a department, agreed TAP reports.
- 1.10 The progression panel will consider the evidence from the student and the supervisor's report (and the agreed TAP reports if applicable) at a **progress review meeting**. Based on these elements, the progression panel will make a decision as to whether the student has met, exceeded or not met the relevant University progression criteria and also make a recommendation regarding student progression.
- 1.11 If the progression panel decides that the student has met or exceeded the relevant University progression criteria, it should recommend:
 - (i) that the student be progressed;if, however, the progression panel decides that the student has *not* yet met the relevant University progression criteria, it may recommend:
 - (ii) that the student be referred (have a second opportunity to meet the relevant University progression criteria); *or*
 - (iii) that the student be invited to transfer to an MPhil programme (for students enrolled on a PhD programme only); *or*
 - (iv) that the student be invited to transfer to a Master's by research programme; *or*
 - (v) that the student be invited to withdraw from the University.
- 1.12 The recommendation from a progression panel is considered by the relevant departmental Graduate School Board (GSB). The role of the GSB is to check that formal reviews of progress have been carried out in accordance with this policy and monitor reviews to ensure that consistent standards are applied. If the GSB endorses the recommendation, it is forwarded to the SCA for consideration. SCA is responsible for approving progression decisions on behalf of Senate. Neither the GSB nor the SCA are expected to question the academic judgement of a progression panel for an individual student.

1.13 Research students are reminded that the decision of a progression panel does not serve as a prediction for the outcome of the final examination.

University progression criteria

1.14 The University's progression criteria for PhD, EngD and MPhil programmes set out the *threshold* requirements for progression to the next stage. They should be understood by reference to what a conscientious research student might reasonably expect to have achieved in the time available.

Progression criteria for a first formal review of progress

1.15 For progression into year 2 of a full-time PhD/EngD or MPhil programme (or equivalent stage of a part-time PhD or MPhil programme), a student must demonstrate that they:

- can describe the direction their research is taking and the research questions it addresses
- have planned in a realistic fashion the second year (or equivalent) of their research, indicating any risks and how these will be mitigated
- have sufficient acquaintance with the relevant field of knowledge to place their research into context
- have sufficient proficiency in the relevant research methods, techniques and theoretical approaches to move their research to the next stage
- have undertaken all required training
- have considered ethical issues (including data management) where applicable.

Progression criteria for a second formal review of progress

1.16 For progression into year 3 of a full-time PhD/EngD programme (or equivalent stage of a part-time PhD programme), a student must demonstrate that they:

- can describe in detail the research questions their project will answer and how this will lead to a substantial original contribution to knowledge or understanding
- have planned in a realistic fashion the third year (or equivalent) of their research, based on the expectation that the project will be completed and the thesis submitted on time, indicating any risks and how these will be mitigated
- have the ability to write up their research in an appropriate academic format for it to be critically assessed by peer reviewers and examiners
- have begun to acquire the wider background knowledge of their research field required for the degree of PhD
- can apply the relevant research methods, techniques and theoretical approaches required to make an original contribution to knowledge or understanding
- have undertaken all required training
- have considered ethical issues (including data management) where applicable.

Progression criteria for a third formal review of progress

1.17 For progression into year 4 of a full-time four-year PhD/EngD programme (or equivalent stage of a part-time four-year PhD programme), a student must demonstrate that they:

- have planned in a realistic fashion the final year (or equivalent) of their research, based on the expectation that the project will be completed and the thesis submitted on time, indicating any risks and how these will be mitigated
- have started to write up their research in an appropriate academic format for it to be critically assessed by peer reviewers and examiners
- have acquired much of the wider background knowledge of their research field required for the degree of PhD
- can apply the relevant research methods, techniques and theoretical approaches required to make an original contribution to knowledge or understanding
- have undertaken all required training
- have considered ethical issues (including data management) where applicable.

Progression panels

1.18 The progression panel for a PhD/EngD or MPhil student should comprise at least two individuals and be independent of the student's supervisor(s). The progression panel should be chaired by a senior academic member of the same or cognate department who has experience of successful research student supervision in the broad disciplinary area within which the student is based. The chair and membership of the progression panel should be approved by the relevant departmental GSB. A member of a progression panel may serve as an internal examiner subject to certain conditions.

1.19 Progression panels are not expected to make detailed judgements about a student's research project, nor to direct the student's future work, rather they are required to determine, on the basis of the evidence from the student and the supervisor's report, if the student meets the relevant University criteria for progression (which are threshold requirements).

1.20 The student should be informed of the membership of their progression panel at the start of the academic year, but with the understanding that, in some circumstances, it may become necessary to change the panel membership.

Alternative models for progression panels

1.21 Some departments may choose to convene progression panels for each student on an individual basis. In this case, the non-supervisory member(s) of the student's TAP will often be part of the progression panel. This approach has the advantage of allowing the progression panel to be tailored to the student's research project.

1.22 Other departments may choose instead to convene a small number of progression panels, each with a pool of suitably qualified individuals (to enable supervisors to stand aside when

their own student is under consideration), to deal with all the progress review meetings for a cohort of students. This approach has the advantage of helping to improve efficiency and consistency of decision-making.

Timing of the review process

1.23 Formal reviews of progress take place within the University timeframe (this refers to GSB endorsement of progression panel recommendations i.e. SCA approval may occur outside this timeframe) as follows:

Maximum period of enrolment prior to progression reviews

	FT Student First Attempt	FT Student Second Attempt	PT Student First Attempt	PT Student Second Attempt
PhD/EngD and MPhil First Formal Review of Progress	9-12 months	15 months (no more than 3 months after first attempt)	18-24 months	30 months (no more than 6 months after first attempt)
PhD/EngD Second Formal Review of Progress	21-24 months	27 months (no more than 3 months after first attempt)	42-48 months	54 months (no more than 6 months after first attempt)
4 Year PhD/EngD Third Formal Review of Progress	33-36 months	39 months (no more than 3 months after first attempt)	66-72 months	78 months (no more than 6 months after first attempt)

1.24 Working within the University timeframe, a department must specify for their standard cohort entry point (i.e. September/October) and any additional cohort entry points (e.g. January) and for each progression point:

- key dates (including the submission date for written evidence (a single date for each cohort), and the timing of presentations, if applicable)
- a six-week window within which progress review meetings will be held
- when the departmental GSB will consider recommendations from progression panels
- key dates applicable to students making a second attempt.

These dates should be clearly communicated to students in the department's research student handbook and as part of the departmental induction process.

- 1.25 Where a student commences a PhD/EngD or MPhil programme outside a cohort entry point or when a student's journey goes out of sync with the rest of their cohort (e.g. due to a leave of absence) the dates specified above will need to be calculated for that individual.
- 1.26 It is considered good practice for a departmental GSB to consider the recommendations of progression panels at a dedicated meeting(s) in order to provide better oversight of the process and its outcomes, and to manage the workload. If the Chair/Deputy of the GSB is involved in a progression panel, the panel's recommendation must be endorsed by the GSB as a whole or by the Board of Studies (or its Chair).

Evidence from the student

- 1.27 Departments are responsible for specifying, for each formal review of progress, how PhD/EngD and MPhil students should demonstrate to the progression panel that they have met the relevant University progression criteria. This approach enables disciplinary differences within and between departments to be catered for. A department's requirements in terms of the evidence that its students should provide must, however, be carefully calibrated against the University progression criteria and, for this reason, are subject to University approval.
- 1.28 The department's requirements in terms of the oral and/or written evidence that its students must provide should be clearly communicated to students in the department's research student handbook and as part of the departmental induction process. The requirements should be presented alongside any formal requirements for TAP meetings so that all the key milestones for a student's programme are available in a single location. When some variation in evidence requirements is permitted within a *single* named PhD/EngD/MPhil programme, the department must have a robust process for ensuring that there is clarity for individual students.
- 1.29 A department's requirements in terms of the evidence that its students must provide should include:

written evidence, for example:

- o (some of the following) a progress report, research plans, a bibliography, a literature review, preliminary results, draft chapters or parts thereof, and draft or published academic papers
- o details of training completed and ethical approval obtained

and will often include (see below):

- **oral evidence**, for example from:

- o discussion between the student and their progression panel at the progress review meeting
- o a presentation from the student followed by a question and answer session.

Notes on evidence from students

- 1.30 Written evidence of substantive length must contribute directly to the thesis (e.g. an introductory or substantive chapter) or an academic paper or similar: this is to ensure that production of the written submission does not distract from the research project itself.
- 1.31 Oral evidence from discussion between the student and their progression panel at the progress review meeting is recommended as an effective and efficient means for a progression panel to determine if a student has met the relevant University progression criteria and because it provides the student with a valuable opportunity to practise explaining and justifying their work to informed academics (as required for the final oral examination).
- 1.32 Oral evidence from a presentation from the student followed by a question and answer session may form part of the progress review meeting. Alternatively, a presentation may take place in advance of the progress review meeting, as long as all members of the progression panel are present. If the presentation is separate from the progress review meeting, it may be open to the wider department, including the supervisor.
- 1.33 Where a department expects students to audit or pass taught modules (e.g. research methods) or other courses, this should be built into the evidence requirements. With respect to taught modules, departments should specify how many credits and at what level, the pass mark required (and whether for individual modules or an average) and reassessment opportunities.

Variation in departmental evidence requirements

- 1.34 Where departments have four-year PhD/EngD programmes and/or specific DTP/CDT PhD programmes it is expected that these programmes will have different evidence requirements from the standard three-year PhD programmes because of the increased focus on taught elements, particularly in the first year.
- 1.35 Within a single named PhD/EngD/MPhil programme, a department may also permit some variation in evidence to accommodate different styles of research project. For example, a social science department might permit some variation in evidence requirements within their standard three-year PhD programme to cater for research projects with a scientific focus vis-à-vis those with a humanities focus, and a science department might permit some variation in evidence requirements within their standard three-year PhD programme to cater for research projects based on field work vis-à-vis those based on laboratory work or to cater for research projects using existing scientific apparatus vis-à-vis those which involve building scientific apparatus.

Supervisor's report

1.36 Prior to a progress review meeting, the student's supervisor will be asked to give their opinion (on a standard University pro forma) as to how well the PhD/EngD or MPhil student meets the relevant University progression criteria. Where there is more than one supervisor, all supervisors should contribute to a single report. The supervisor(s) should have access to their student's written evidence prior to writing the report, and the supervisor may also have be present at their student's presentation (if applicable) unless this forms part of the progress review meeting.

Progress review meetings

1.37 At a progress review meeting, a progression panel considers the evidence from the PhD/EngD or MPhil student (see 1.30), alongside the supervisor's report and, where required by a department, agreed TAP reports. Based on these elements, the progression panel will make a decision as to whether the student has met, exceeded or not met the relevant University progression criteria, and also make a recommendation regarding student progression.

1.38 Progress review meetings are held in person to facilitate full discussion of a student's case. If, for good reason, a member of the progression panel has to participate remotely this should be by means of video-conferencing (e.g. Skype) and this should be indicated on the progression panel decision/recommendation form. A supervisor may only attend a progress review meeting as an observer if their presence is requested by the student.

Student attendance

1.39 If a department's evidence requirements include oral evidence obtained at the progress review meeting, then a student will, as a matter of course, be present at their progress review meeting. This ensures that a student has every opportunity to demonstrate to their progression panel that they have met the relevant University progression criteria and it enables the panel to address, with the student, any issues arising from their supervisor's report and/or agreed TAP reports (where required by the department). Where a student's presence in a progress review meeting is required, the student may be present throughout the meeting, or the panel may have private deliberations before and/or after their discussion with the student. If, for good reason, a student needs to participate remotely in a progress review meeting, permission must be sought in advance from the Head of RSAT.

1.40 If a department's evidence requirements (see 1.30) do *not* include oral evidence obtained at the progress review meeting, then a student will not, as a matter of course, be present at their progress review meeting. If, however, a progression panel does not feel able, on the basis of the evidence provided by a student and/or the supervisor's report and/or the agreed TAP reports (if applicable), to recommend that an individual student be progressed, then a meeting at which the student in question *is present*, along with at least two members of the

progression panel (normally including the Chair), must be scheduled as soon as possible (and within department's specified window for progress review meetings). The purpose of requiring the progression panel (or part thereof) to meet with the student in this instance is to give the student (who is at risk of not progressing at the first attempt) every opportunity to demonstrate that they have met the relevant University progression criteria. If, for good reason, a student needs to participate remotely in such a meeting, permission must be sought in advance from the Head of RSAT.

- 1.41 Where a department requires its students to be present at their progress review meetings as a matter of course (as in 1.40 above, i.e. the department's evidence requirements include oral evidence obtained at the progress review meeting), the second TAP meeting of each year (full-time students) may be integrated within the review meeting (i.e. in addition to making a formal decision about the student's progress, the progress review panel (in the absence of the supervisor) works with the student to deliver the developmental aspect of the TAP meeting and to complete the TAP form). Alternatively, some departments may wish to schedule progress review and TAP meetings consecutively; with the progress review meeting reconvening as a TAP meeting once the supervisor has joined.

Referral

- 1.42 If, at a student's first attempt and having met the with student, a progression panel decides that a student on a PhD or MPhil programme has *not* yet met the relevant University progression criteria, it must recommend referral (a second opportunity to meet the progression criteria), programme transfer or withdrawal (see 1.11). The progression panel's recommendation will be considered by the relevant departmental GSB. If the GSB endorses the recommendation, the student will be informed of the next steps (see below).
- 1.43 If a student has not met the relevant University progression criteria at the first attempt, in determining what recommendation to make, the progression panel should consider what would be in the best interests of the student concerned. If the student's performance at the first attempt is such that the progression panel thinks it is unlikely that the student will meet the progression criteria at the second attempt, or the panel believes that preparing for a second attempt would seriously compromise a student's likelihood of completion on time, then the progression panel should recommend transfer or withdrawal. To recommend transfer, the progression panel should agree that there is a realistic possibility of the student successfully completing the programme to which they would be transferred within a reasonable time period (taking into account the normal period of enrolment for the degree in question and the need for any extensions, if required, to be approved).
- 1.44 The progression panel will provide the student with clear written feedback about why the progression criteria were not met and its reasons for recommending referral, transfer or withdrawal. The progression panel will specify, in broad terms, what the student would need to do to meet the relevant University progression criteria at the second attempt.

- 1.45 In the case of a recommendation for programme transfer or withdrawal, the student may choose to accept the recommendation or, alternatively, decide to make a second attempt at meeting the relevant University progression criteria against the advice of the progression panel. The student must confirm whether they wish to contest a recommendation for transfer or withdrawal within four weeks of the recommendation being endorsed by the relevant departmental GSB, otherwise the recommendation will stand.
- 1.46 If the student does not contest a recommendation for transfer to an alternative programme, the student's enrolment will be transferred and they will be bound by the normal regulations and requirements of their new programme. Transfers to a Master's by research programme will include an automatic extension of three months (from the date of the GSB's endorsement of the transfer) to enable the student to produce a suitable thesis for submission. Transfers to an MPhil programme following a first or second formal review of progress will not come with an automatic extension as a student should be able to produce their MPhil thesis within the normal period of enrolment plus the continuation period. Transfers to an MPhil programme following a third progression point (four-year PhD programmes only) will include an automatic extension of six months (from the date of the GSB's endorsement of the transfer).

Making a second attempt at meeting the progression criteria

- 1.47 If a student has a second attempt at meeting the relevant University progression criteria they will continue on their programme pending a decision regarding the second attempt.
- 1.48 Where a student makes a second attempt at meeting the relevant University progression criteria, the final recommendation from the progression panel must be submitted by the relevant departmental GSB to SCA for consideration by the deadline specified in 1.24 above (i.e. for full-time students no later than three months after the date of the first attempt at progression). The department must ensure that the timetable for making a second attempt (including provision for a second review meeting, if required) enables this deadline to be met.
- 1.49 The relevant departmental GSB will supply the student with the date by which they must present revised evidence. The progression panel will also state whether the supervisor(s) will be required to submit a new supervisor's report in the light of the revised written submission from the student.
- 1.50 The student will need to work with the supervisor(s) to draw up an action plan and identify any support needs to cover the period leading up to the second attempt. The student is, however, ultimately responsible for ensuring that they address the points raised by progression panel at the first attempt.
- 1.51 If the revised evidence presented by the student - plus the new supervisor's report if required - is sufficient to satisfy the progression panel that the student has now met or

exceeded the relevant University progression criteria, then a second progress review meeting is not required.

1.52 If the revised evidence presented by the student - plus the new supervisor's report if required - is not sufficient to satisfy the progression panel that the student has met or exceeded the relevant University progression criteria, then a further progress review meeting is required. The progression panel (or at least two members of the panel, including the Chair) must meet with the student, normally face-to-face, and the discussion with the student must be audio-recorded. If, for good reason, a student needs to participate remotely, permission must be sought in advance from the Head of RSAT.

1.53 If – based on the revised evidence, the new supervisor's report (if applicable) and discussion with the student (if applicable) – the progression panel decides that the student has met or exceeded the relevant University progression criteria at the second attempt, it should recommend:

- (i) that the student be progressed;

if, however, the progression panel decides that the student has *not* met the relevant University progression criteria at the second attempt, the student will be deemed to have failed the progression point and the progression panel must recommend:

- (ii) that the student be transferred to an MPhil programme (for students enrolled on a PhD programme only); *or*
- (iii) that the student be transferred to a Master's by research programme; *or*
- (iv) that the student's enrolment with the University be terminated.

The progression panel should provide reasons for its choice of (i)-(iv).

1.54 The recommendation of the progression panel will be considered by the relevant departmental GSB. If the GSB endorses the recommendation, it will be forwarded to the SCA for consideration. SCA is responsible for approving progression decisions on behalf of Senate.

1.55 If a student progresses as a consequence of meeting or exceeding the University's progression criteria at the second attempt this does not alter the timing of the next formal review of progression (if applicable), nor change the period of enrolment, nor alter the deadline for submission of the thesis.

1.56 If a student has not met the relevant University progression criteria at the second attempt, in determining whether to make a recommendation for transfer or termination, the progression panel should consider what would be in the best interests of the student concerned. To recommend transfer, the progression panel should agree that there is a realistic possibility of the student completing the programme to which they would be

transferred within a reasonable period (taking into account the normal period of enrolment for the degree in question).

- 1.57 If the SCA approves a recommendation for termination of enrolment, the student's enrolment will be terminated immediately. If SCA approves a recommendation for transfer, the student's enrolment will be transferred, subject to the approval of any extensions if required, and they will be bound by the normal regulations and requirements of their new programme. Transfers to a Master's by research programme will include an automatic extension of three months (from the date of SCA approval of transfer) to enable the student to produce a suitable thesis for submission. Transfers to an MPhil programme following a first or second formal review of progress will not come with an automatic extension as a student should be able to produce their MPhil thesis within the normal period of enrolment plus the continuation period. Transfers to an MPhil programme following a third formal review of progress (four-year PhD programmes only) will include an automatic extension of six months (from the date of SCA approval of transfer).
- 1.58 A student retains the right of appeal against a failure to progress if they can establish grounds for doing so, as outlined in University Regulation 2.8

Entry into a continuation period

- 1.59 There is no formal review of progress for research students entering into a continuation period, where this is permitted (i.e. for three-year PhD programmes, MPhil programmes and their part-time equivalents), because the expectation is that these students should be near to submitting their theses.
- 1.60 Departments are, however, asked to ensure that students who wish to enter a continuation period are asked to, provide evidence to their TAP, in a form specified by their department, that they have started to write up their research in an appropriate academic format for it to be critically assessed by peer reviewers and examiners, and have planned in a realistic fashion how the thesis will be completed to the required standard within the specified time limit.
- 1.61 This evidence should be scrutinised at the final TAP prior to the student entering the continuation period. Where the TAP has concerns about the evidence presented, the student should be advised to seek additional advice and support from their supervisor(s) and the GSB alerted so that they can monitor the situation.

Exceptional and mitigating circumstances, including extension of progression deadlines

- 1.62 If a PhD or MPhil student does not produce the evidence required by their department for a formal review of progress (including non-attendance at a progression-related meeting, if applicable) and there are no mitigating circumstances then the student's progress review panel will deem the student not to have met the relevant progression criteria and should

normally recommend that the student be withdrawn (first attempt at progression) or their enrolment terminated (second attempt at progression).

- 1.63 A department may grant an extension to a student for an *internal* (i.e. departmental) deadline for a formal reviews of progress (e.g. relating to the date for submission of written evidence or the timing of the progress review meetings) in line with their normal mitigating circumstance procedures as long as the University deadlines relating to formal reviews of progress (as set out in 1.24 above) can still be met.
- 1.64 A department may seek an extension to a University deadline for a formal review of progress (see 1.24 above) only in the case of exceptional circumstances relating to an individual student (namely where a student's ability to complete the formal review of progress has been hampered by documented medical or personal reasons or, more rarely, extraordinary and unexpected academic circumstances which can be addressed without affecting the ability of the student to submit their thesis on time). The magnitude of the research task, or failure on the part of the student to perceive or act on the magnitude of the research task, is not a reason for an extension.
- 1.65 A request for an extension to a University deadline for a formal review of progress due to exceptional circumstances relating to staff involved in the process (e.g. the absence of the supervisor) will not normally be considered as departments should make alternative arrangements in such circumstances so as not to disadvantage the students concerned.
- 1.66 A request for an extension to a University deadline for a formal review of progress will not be considered until the student in question is within two months of the deadline. An extension will normally be limited to two months and the total period of extension that may normally be approved will be four months.
- 1.67 Requests for extensions to University deadlines should be submitted to the Research Student Administration Team. Requests will be considered by the Research Student Administration Team in the first instance and approved under delegated authority or referred to the Special Cases Committee for consideration where necessary.
- 1.68 Any extension to the deadline for a formal review of progress will not alter the timing of the next formal review of progress (if applicable), nor change the period of enrolment, nor alter the date for submission of the thesis.
- 1.69 Departments should use the formal reviews of progress as an opportunity to assess whether a student might benefit from a leave of absence to deal with mitigating circumstances, or a transfer of programme, or a change in the mode of study (e.g. from full-time to part-time) in line with the *Policy on Research Degrees*.