



Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes

**(With Addendum for Research Masters'
Degree Programmes)**

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NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY CODE OF PRACTICE FOR RESEARCH DEGREE PROGRAMMES

Information outlined in this Code of Practice is accurate at the date of publication, but changes to programmes and University services may be necessary, for example; to meet the requirements of an accrediting body or to keep courses up to date and in line with contemporary practices or areas of study; or as a result of circumstances outside the reasonable control of the University. Please see the University's [Terms and Conditions](#) for further information.

Where reference is made to any named University role, such references are to be read as including reference to their nominees.

This Code of Practice uses Academic Unit as an overarching term for School and Institute.

Introduction

1. Newcastle University is a leading research-intensive university with a distinguished record of advancing knowledge and understanding through the pursuit of research and scholarship. As part of its commitment to research it provides, through its three-faculty structure, a range of research programmes designed to enable you to undertake research training and to make your own contribution to knowledge and understanding in your subject.
2. The purpose of this Code of Practice is to set out the University's standards for its research programmes.
3. This Code of Practice will be used by PhDs, MPhils, MDs and the thesis element of any doctorate level programme including Integrated PhDs and Professional Doctorates. Any research degree programme wishing to be exempt will require UEC approval. (Please see the addendum at the end of the code for clarification on standards relating to research masters' programmes).

The Research Environment

4. The University will only permit research programmes to be offered where it is confident that students can be trained and supported within an environment which is supportive of research.
5. It defines such an environment as where an Academic Unit:
 - Is able to demonstrate significant international research excellence as demonstrated by the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE)/ Research Excellence Framework (REF).
 - Has a critical mass of staff to act as suitable supervisors.
 - Satisfies the requirements of the University Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework including acceptable submission and completion rates that meet the requirements for the Research Council in that subject area.
 - Provides appropriate facilities.
6. The University defines provision of facilities to meet the appropriate standard as follows:

- [Working Space](#)

You can expect working space in appropriate shared office/open-plan/hot-desk accommodation, with adequate access, heating, ventilation and security arrangements. You should be given reasonable space for the secure and safe storage of essential books, consumables, personal belongings and research data. In addition, if you are a student undertaking laboratory/studio-based research projects you can expect access to bench/studio space and associated facilities (see below).

If you are working on a multi-disciplinary project (across different academic units and/or Faculties), there should be a discussion at the start of your studies about appropriate working arrangements, resulting in the identification of the lead and secondary sites. The secondary site should allocate appropriate facilities to you, where needed.

If there is disruption to your working space, as a consequence, for example, of maintenance or

construction work, then you can expect to be advised by your Academic Unit regarding the impact on your study, and can expect reasonable steps to be taken to minimise any such disruption including, if necessary, provision of alternative accommodation.

- [Access to Laboratory/Studio/Workshop Space etc. \(where relevant\)](#)

You can expect to be given bench space and facilities to conduct your approved research project, including any laboratory consumables and access to equipment and facilities agreed by the project approval panel to be necessary and within the budget for that project. Equipment approved for the research project will be provided in a timely manner and maintained in good working order throughout the project. You will receive proper health and safety training in the use of the necessary equipment and consumables and should receive an induction into the required conduct and working practices of the laboratory/studio/workshop.

- [Consumables](#)

You can expect to be provided with:

- Appropriate supply of normal office consumables, including paper for black and white printing on campus.
- Access to reasonable black and white photocopying, as agreed with your supervisor in connection with your research.
- Where you are using a computer workstation, it shall comply with the schedule to the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations.
- Lab/day books as needed.
- Access to a telephone, with reasonable telephone calls in connection with your research, which may be logged.

- [IT Equipment](#)

You can expect access to a networked PC/laptop and printer, as well as access to a scanner, if and when needed. Where the research project so requires, you can expect to have access to a more powerful PC capable, for example, of handling complex, large-set data analysis, or set up with specialist software, in line with your approved project.

- [NU Reflect and PGR CoP System](#)

You will have access to NU Reflect and the PGR CoP System and are required to maintain and record formal supervisions, training, project approval and annual progress.

- [Funding for Conference Attendance and Travel](#)

You should have a reasonable opportunity to attend and/or participate in a conference, with the agreement of your supervisor and subject to available funding. You should contact your Academic Unit, in the first instance, for further information on available funding. A record of attendance should be kept on NU Reflect.

- [Social Facilities](#)

To facilitate social interaction, you can expect to have access to common room facilities, which may combine with staff common rooms if this is agreed by the Academic Unit.

7. In the case of Academic Units or research groupings which for any reason do not meet the normal criterion the University may, on the advice of a Dean of Postgraduate Studies, authorise the offering of research degrees where there is evidence that research of at least national standing is being undertaken in the applicant's specific subject and that other conditions set out above have been or will be met.

Pre-Entry Information

8. In order to enable a potential applicant to make an informed choice, the University requires that units offering research degrees provide clear, accurate and comprehensive pre-entry information. This should inform an applicant as fully as possible about the relevant programme including research opportunities, training, resources, submission and completion times, expectations and demands upon research students (including financial ones), entry requirements, the admissions process, information about scholarships, and appropriate contacts. Pre-entry information should also provide relevant information for potential applicants with disabilities and signpost to a contact in the Student Health and Wellbeing Service.

Entry Standards and Applications

9. The University defines the minimum standard for admission to research programmes as normally an Upper Second-Class Honours degree in a relevant subject or a relevant Master's degree. Any subject-specific qualification requirements should be identified to applicants via the University's prospectus or Academic Unit research grouping information.

10. In addition, if your first language is not English, the University requires evidence of acceptable competence in the language to be submitted at the time of application.

11. All applicants are required to submit the names of two recent academic referees or one academic and a professional employer who can comment knowledgeably upon their suitability for research in the relevant field.

Selection of Research Students

12. In order to assist the match between student, research project, supervisory team and institution the University requires that there should be rigorous selection policies and procedures, which should be put in writing, and which should normally include:

- a policy of involving at least two experienced and research-active academics in the selection process, normally one of whom will form part of the supervisory team and one will act on behalf of the Head of Academic Unit to approve the offer of a place:
 - who have been informed about selection of research students;
 - who are fully cognisant with University and statutory policies on equal opportunities;
 - who are aware of the support infrastructure for students with additional needs;
 - a policy of interviewing shortlisted applicants for Doctoral degrees, where practical;
 - a policy of taking up two references and, if one or more of these is not available at the time of offer, making the latter conditional upon the receipt of satisfactory references;
 - clear selection procedures;
 - making decisions on applications promptly and keeping applicants informed during the admissions process.

Letters of Offer

13. Once it has been decided to accept an applicant, a formal offer must be made. The letter of offer should be accompanied by: information on fees and any other charges; the broad research topic and the length of study; arrangements for supervision; and should direct applicants to requirements upon them (including attendance, progress reports, contact, enrolment and registration); expectations in terms of academic and behavioural conduct and performance requirements; the availability of research training; and direction to other relevant information, e.g. the institutional policy on Intellectual Property Rights. Applicants should assure themselves that they have sufficient financial support to complete the degree.

Induction into the University and the Faculty

14. The University requires that your Faculty provides you with an appropriate induction programme within three months of registration to enable you to acquire an understanding of the academic and social environment within which you will be working.

15. The induction programme should include:

an introduction to the University including:

- its history and development;
- relevant regulations, policies and procedures relating to research degree.

an induction into matters relating to your relationship with the institution including:

- the University's academic and behavioural expectations of you;
- the typical challenges that you might face during your studies;
- institutional facilities available to you, including the learning support infrastructure;

- institutional provision for student wellbeing and other support arrangements;
- complaints and appeals procedures.

an induction into matters relating to your progress supported by the Graduate School and PGR Researcher Development Programme staff including:

- nominated contacts for support and advice outside the supervisory team;
- the specific facilities and PGR Researcher Development Programme opportunities available to you within the Faculty and across the University;
- provision within the University for student wellbeing and other support arrangements.
- information about the opportunities to meet other research students and staff and about opportunities to broaden your knowledge through seminars, conferences, forums, etc.

16. The University requires that the Faculty annually review the induction programme.

Induction into the Programme

17. The University requires that Academic Units make appropriate arrangements for induction into your programme of study. These should actively involve the designated academic supervisor and include an induction for you into:

- the academic standards of the programme;
- the intended learning outcomes;
- the curriculum including the PGR Researcher Development training programme and the research element of the individual project;
- methods of teaching and learning;
- assessment;
- regulations governing the research programme, including progression;
- subject-related research codes and ethics;
- programme-related health and safety requirements.

18. The University requires that you attend induction programmes.

Learning Agreements

19. The University requires that your Academic Unit ensures you have received, understood, and accepted the expectations of your research programme. These expectations should be set out in a formal Learning Agreement, which should be discussed and signed by you and by your supervisor/s on behalf of the University, within one month of starting the programme and is completed on the PGR CoP system. This will include a discussion on:

- Meetings/formal contact between you and your supervisory team, including who is responsible for arranging these;
- your training needs.

Completion of the Learning Agreement is recorded on your student record.

20. You and your supervisor/s should also discuss whether a Confidentiality Agreement is required and if so, this should be completed along with the Learning Agreement.

21. The University requires that you should inform your supervisor/s and the Graduate School about any sponsorship you have received for your research project and obligations in terms of reporting to sponsors on progress.

The Development of Relevant Knowledge and Skills – Training Needs Analysis

22. The University requires that Faculties ensure that Faculty [researcher development programmes](#) offer you the opportunity to develop a relevant range of knowledge and skills, including skills for employment. It requires that the learning outcomes of such programmes are consistent with the Vitae Researcher Development Framework.

23. The University requires that you, in conjunction with your supervisory team, undertake a Training Needs Analysis (TNA) in [NU Reflect](#) and agree a personal skills development programme. This should take into account your prior learning and experience, your needs in terms of study skills, the needs of

your research project, and employment related skills. It requires that you actively seek to acquire relevant skills. Your supervisory team should make appropriate arrangements for you:

- to undertake a Training Needs Analysis (TNA) to identify your training needs;
- to identify gaps;
- to provide opportunities for development;
- to record the development of skills;
- to ensure that you are introduced to relevant academic networks;
- to advise you on opportunities to attend and/or participate in seminars, and conferences;
- to encourage you to present papers;
- where appropriate, to encourage you to publish;
- to support career development.

24. This TNA should be reviewed annually with the supervisory team, and you should maintain an up-to-date record in NU Reflect.

The University requires that you should have appropriate access to research training programmes and to individual advice and support and that you should complete the researcher development programme and any prescribed taught courses, and successfully complete any assessments and/or examinations. This applies to all students, including those who are part-time, have additional needs, or who are remote from the institution.

Research Environment

25. The University requires that you contribute to the research environment by attending appropriate internal and external events and normally give one formal presentation per year on your work. The University requires that these events are recorded in NU Reflect.

26. The University requires that you be responsible for helping to improve the research environment and provision by providing feedback and through representation on relevant committees and decision-making bodies.

27. The University requires that you abide by this Code of Practice. If you do not abide by this Code of Practice the issue will be addressed under the Unsatisfactory Progress regulations by an Annual Progress Review Panel.

Support for Research Students

28. A thesis demonstrates your ability to undertake original research. It follows that all research outputs (written documents, creative work, etc) produced as part of a PhD (or other Doctoral degree) or MPhil must solely be your own work. You will be examined in the oral examination to demonstrate that the research has been carried out by you; to test your ability to defend your thesis and establish whether you have satisfactory knowledge of the wider field in which the research is placed. It is crucial that the research must be an intellectual project that is conducted and owned by you, and where the theoretical perspective, methodological approach, interpretation of the data generated, and the conclusions drawn are all your own.

29. Given these considerations it is important that you are aware of the degree of support that is acceptable when conducting research. The *Guidelines on Good Practice in Research Supervision* and the *Guidelines for Research Students and Research Supervisors* (Handbook for Research Students and Research Supervisors (part three)) cover in detail the relationship between the student and the supervisory team and outlines good professional practice during the conduct of research and indicates the support that you can expect from your supervisor. If you were to contravene this guidance, it may be considered as academic misconduct, see the [Academic Misconduct Procedure](#).

Supervisory Arrangements

30. The University requires that supervision should normally be undertaken by a team consisting of at least two members (normally two members of Newcastle staff) with the appropriate research skills and knowledge, who should be registered on an approved list of supervisors held by the Graduate School and therefore demonstrably research active. The minimum supervision percentage for a member of the

supervisory team is 10%. Where for any reason this is not practical, for example where one supervisor is based outside the University, one supervisor from the approved supervisory list is acceptable provided that they also discharge the responsibilities of the academic supervisor outlined below. Where External Advisors form part of the supervisory team, the [Principles for the Appointment of an External Advisor](#) should be consulted.

31. It is expected that you will have two supervisors at the point of your initial registration on your programme. The Graduate School will request this information from your Academic Units following your initial registration. A review of your supervisory arrangements will be carried out at the Project Approval stage and approved by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies.

32. An Emeritus member of staff may be used to provide supervision but should be added to the Supervisory Team as an External Advisor and would be in addition to the Supervisory Team members who are employees of the University.

33. Colleagues who have not previously supervised research students are required to undertake appropriate initial supervisor development, while experienced supervisors are normally expected to undertake continuing professional development relevant to the supervisory role, for example participate in University/Faculty/Academic Unit supervisory updating sessions.

34. There are different models of supervisory team within the University. In joint supervision, the supervisory responsibilities are shared equally between members of the supervisory team. In other styles of supervision, different members of the supervisory team may have different roles. There may be, for example, a lead supervisor and a co-supervisor responsible for a smaller element of the planned research; or a lead supervisor and an advisor responsible for, and able to deal with, general and pastoral responsibilities. Since arrangements may vary, the supervisory team must agree a clear distribution of responsibilities at the outset of the research and update this if arrangements change. In all instances, one supervisor must be nominated as academic supervisor and this person is ultimately responsible for the quality assurance of the research programme.

The academic supervisor:

- must be a member of the staff of the University;
- must have gained a Doctoral degree or have equivalent experience of research;
- be demonstrably research-active;
- should normally have had previous experience of at least one successful supervision, whether as academic or co-supervisor, defined as taking the student all the way through to a research degree award.

In cases where the academic supervisor does not have such experience, the supervisory team must include another member who is a demonstrably active researcher with experience of at least two successful supervisions.

35. The academic supervisor is responsible for:

- being aware of the University's Code of Practice for Research Degrees and other relevant University regulations;
- completing a Learning Agreement, Training Needs Analysis, Personal Development Plan, and any appropriate risk assessments with you, and ensuring Project Approval is undertaken;
- providing the supervisory input to Annual Progress Review;
- determining if an Intellectual Property Rights or a Confidentiality Agreement is required;
- promoting awareness of ethical and professional requirements for the conduct of research and ensuring that ethical approval is obtained for the research, where appropriate;
- being the first point of contact in the supervisory team for the University and ensuring that any relevant request relating to you e.g., extensions, interruptions is properly processed and recorded, providing pastoral support and guidance to you, and acting as a signpost to University central services;
- offering support to you in your personal and career development;
- arranging together with the Head of Academic Unit a replacement supervisor where one of

- the supervisory team is absent;
 - arranging and co-ordinating the final examination.
36. In many instances, the academic supervisor will also be lead supervisor who will also be responsible for:
- introducing you to the Academic Unit, its facilities and procedures;
 - being your first point of contact in the supervisory team;
 - agreeing a suitable research field of enquiry with you;
 - research project management including arranging a timetable of regular meetings in line with the Code of Practice, requiring you to keep a record of meetings and agreeing the outcome of meetings with you on NU Reflect;
 - arranging a realistic timetable for submission and completion in line with any Research Council requirements and the University's maximum candidature;
 - requesting written work according to an agreed schedule and returning work with constructive criticism in a reasonable time, as agreed at the outset of the research with you;
 - chairing formal supervisory meetings;
 - encouraging you to attend [researcher development](#) sessions within the University and where relevant externally, attend and present at conferences and seminars and signposting central services such as careers.
37. Where there is a lead supervisor, a co-supervisor supervisor should:
- be acquainted with the progress of your work and attend formal supervisory meetings at least 3 times per year or additionally as required by you or lead supervisor;
 - comment on your work where required by the lead supervisor;
 - provide additional advice where required e.g., supervise specific elements of data collection, data analysis and thesis preparation;
 - assume the lead supervisor's responsibilities if the original lead supervisor is unable to continue (e.g., through illness or departure);
 - act as mentor or arbitrator if you have any problems that cannot be resolved by the lead supervisor.
38. Where supervisors share responsibilities more equally than outlined above (joint supervision) they should collectively agree the allocation of tasks while ensuring that one supervisor acts as academic supervisor. The responsibilities of different supervisors should be recorded on the project approval form and any changes communicated to the Graduate School.
39. Your supervisory team do not automatically have ownership of the research project undertaken. If an Intellectual Property Rights agreement is required, it is the responsibility of the academic supervisor to determine this.
40. The University requires that Faculties maintain an up-to-date list of colleagues who are qualified to engage in research supervision from information provided by the Head of Academic Unit and this is maintained by the relevant Graduate School.
41. The University requires that the maximum period of absence for any member of the supervisory team should not exceed three months, following which appropriate alternative arrangements should be made by the Academic Unit and reported to the Graduate School to ensure continuity of supervision.
42. Where a supervisory team member leaves the University, the Academic Unit should inform the Graduate School as soon as possible, so that revised supervisory arrangements can be put in place for affected students.
43. In order to ensure that individual supervisors are not overloaded, the University requires appropriate limits on the numbers of research students who may be supervised by an individual supervisor, subject to a normal maximum of six full-time equivalent students. Where Heads of Academic Units allow supervisors to take responsibility for more than six full-time equivalent students, the University requires them to make arrangements to ensure that there will be adequate contact between student and supervisor and that the latter is not overburdened. The Head of Academic Unit is

responsible for ensuring that the overall workload of supervisory staff, including secondary supervisions, is at a level that will allow supervisors to deliver the relevant aspects of the Code of Practice for their students.

44. The University requires that the supervisory performance of individual staff is reviewed annually as part of performance development and review.

45. The University requires that you have access to confidential advice and support from a nominated contact outside the supervisory team. It requires that Faculties should designate such contacts, which should include a Faculty Postgraduate Tutor and others at Academic Unit and/or programme level as appropriate and make this information available to you. The relevant Graduate School Manager is also available to provide advice and guidance to you. (The Faculty Postgraduate Tutor has considerable experience of postgraduate matters and can offer impartial and confidential advice and they can be consulted in confidence at any stage of your research.)

46. The University requires that Academic Units designate a nominated contact, who would normally be the Director of Postgraduate Studies, or equivalent, who supervisors can access for confidential advice and support, particularly where they have concerns about a student's ability or application to the programme. The Academic Unit should make this information available. The relevant Graduate School Manager is also available to provide advice and guidance to supervisors.

Contact with Supervisory Team

47. The University requires that you maintain regular contact with your supervisory team through agreed formal interactions/meetings. As a minimum, if you are a full-time student you should have:

- regular contact/meetings with their supervisory team, at least ten times a year, approximately monthly, with no more than an eight-week gap between meetings, while you are in candidature until submission of your thesis.
- regular contact/meetings with each member of your supervisory team, at least on three occasions each year.
- at least one meeting each year should be held with your full supervisory team to discuss your progress, usually in advance of your annual progress review.

When completing the Learning Agreement, you and your supervisory team should discuss the arrangements for the regular contact, including who is responsible for organising these.

A formal interaction is a structured meeting whereby you and your supervisory team engage in a meaningful discussion, e.g., discuss a piece of work and agree on an action plan. The interaction can take place in person, or at a distance (for example via Zoom) if you are away on fieldwork.

In cases where you are not able to meet these requirements because you are studying outside the University, e.g., in another organisation as part of a CASE studentship or undertaking fieldwork, you are required to agree an equivalent schedule of contact/meetings with your supervisory team, using for example E-mail and online meetings.

If you are a part-time student, or studying your programme away from an approved campus, you should still have regular contact with your supervisory team and should discuss and agree the number of formal interactions with your supervisory team as part of your Learning Agreement, ensuring there is no more than a 10-week gap between meetings.

The University requires that you record and confirm the outcomes of your formal interactions on NU Reflect.

48. In addition, if you are a Student Visa holder you should continue to record and confirm the outcomes of your regular contact with your supervisory team, while under examination through to completion of your studies, as a condition of your visa sponsorship. These meeting records and outcomes may be requested by the Home Office, as part of the University's sponsorship duties.

49. The University requires that you bring academic problems with your research project promptly to the attention of your supervisory team so that they can provide support.

50. The University requires that you bring non-academic problems with a bearing on the progress of

your research (e.g., financial, social, domestic, or health problems) promptly to the attention of your supervisory team.

Supervisory Support

51. Over the course of the research the relationship between you and your supervisory team will change. In the initial stages of the research the supervisory team will induct you into the research field and acquaint you with the research conducted within it. As the research progresses you will gradually develop greater independence and by the final stages of the research, you will be able to operate as an independent researcher capable of actively engaging in your field. In general terms, supervisory support can include:

- Assistance with the choice of topic;
- Critical and constructive feedback on the work produced;
- Advice on the sources or literature used;
- Guidance on the methodology or techniques used and the approach to data collection;
- Discussion of evidence and results;
- Reading drafts and commenting on issues of substance.

Supervisors **will not**:

- Undertake the actual research itself;
- Write or significantly redraft papers or chapters;
- Conduct a detailed proofread of the thesis.

Changes to Supervisory Teams

52. Occasionally it may be necessary to make changes to supervisory teams where, for example, the academic focus of the research project has altered, where supervisory responsibilities have changed, or where members of the supervisory team have left the employment of the University. If this is the result of a temporary absence of a member of staff, other members of the supervisory team will continue the supervision with responsibilities being adjusted accordingly. Where the members of the supervisory team are permanently changed, you should normally be consulted in advance. The University will take all reasonable steps to replace supervisors with suitable alternatives and may extraordinarily include arrangements for supervisors to be from a different academic unit or even from outside the University.

53. However, particularly where it is your choice to effect a change in your project or supervisory arrangements, it may not always be possible to provide suitable alternatives due to the specialist nature of Doctoral or MPhil study. In such a situation, it may not be possible for you to continue with your programme of study.

54. On rare occasions, supervisory relations may break down. In such circumstances, in the first instance, you should consult with another member of the supervisory team. If it is not possible to resolve the problems in this manner, you and/or a member of your supervisory team should report difficulties to the Head of Academic Unit. They may refer the matter, if necessary, to the relevant Graduate School or Dean of Postgraduate Studies for advice and mediation. However, you may consult directly with the Graduate School or Dean of Postgraduate Studies in confidence. Where possible, prompt action should be taken to resolve the conflict, and where necessary, you or a supervisor may request a change of supervisor from the Head of Academic Unit. In making any changes to the supervisory team due consideration must be given to the need to provide supervisory expertise that is appropriate to the project, in line with the Code of Practice.

55. All supervisory changes must be notified to the relevant Graduate School and be approved by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies.

The Development and Approval of Research Project Proposals – Project Approval

56. Research project proposals may be developed prior to the recruitment of a student for purposes of obtaining funding or subsequently by the student following registration or the successful completion of the taught phase of the programme.

57. Where the research proposal is developed following registration, the University requires that the

supervisory team supports you in its development. In particular, the supervisory team needs to ensure that the project is achievable within the timescale of the programme, and to confirm that sufficient resources will be available to support it.

58. You should submit your project proposal on the [PGR CoP system](#) within three months of starting your programme, even where your project proposal has already been reviewed and approved by external peer review.

59. An impartial Project Approval Panel and Head of Academic Unit must consider project proposals, before being submitted for consideration to the relevant Dean of Postgraduate Studies. The Project Approval Panel should consist of at least two impartial University members of academic staff (one of which can be an Honorary member of staff) with relevant skills and knowledge, at least one of which should be demonstrably research-active and at least one of whom should have experience of successful supervision.

60. It is the responsibility of any impartial panel member to declare if they have a conflict of interest such as a personal or professional relationship with you, or a member of the supervisory team. The Academic Unit should consider any perceived conflict of interests when appointing impartial panel members. The Dean of Postgraduate Studies has the final decision on panel members, if any concerns are raised.

61. When appointing panel members, Academic Units should give consideration to the nature of the project, particularly for interdisciplinary projects, as well as to the composition of the panel from an EDI perspective, where possible.

62. The University requires the Project Approval Panel to evaluate research proposals against the criteria;

- that the project has clear aims and objectives;
- that you have (or can acquire) the knowledge, skills, and aptitudes to complete the project successfully;
- that the proposed supervisory team has, or will be able to acquire, the skills, knowledge and aptitudes necessary to supervise the project to a successful conclusion;
- that the project is suitable for the programme of study and for the award;
- that it can be completed within the timescale for the programme;
- that sufficient resources will be available to complete the project;
- whether ethical approval is required;
- in cases where the project involves extended absence from the University on fieldwork or work in collaborating organisations, that appropriate arrangements will be made to support you and to monitor your progress.

63. In order to evaluate these matters, the panel will need evidence in the forms of:

- a research proposal;
- a research plan;
- a supporting statement by the supervisory team.

64. The Project Approval Panel should consider the evidence and the criteria outlined above in order to make a recommendation and written report on your proposal (on the PGR CoP system), which will be made available to you and your supervisory team once the recommendation has been confirmed by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies.

65. The Project Approval Panel has two recommendations available to them:

- Approval
- Re-submission – where the Project Approval Panel has significant concerns about the proposal, which can be in relation to any of the criteria outlined above

66. In the event of a resubmission outcome, the Project Approval Panel report should indicate the steps necessary for you to address these concerns. The University requires that Faculties should establish maximum times for the re-submission of proposals, not exceeding three months (six months for part-time students).

67. When the Project Approval Panel is satisfied on the above matters, it then recommends the research project for approval to the Head of Academic Unit and the Dean of Postgraduate Studies.

68. All proposals that are formally approved are recorded on your student record, along with your supervisory arrangements.

69. If the Project Approval Panel does not approve your research project and/or the supervisory arrangements following reassessment of the project proposal, it should make a recommendation of 'Termination' of studies to the Dean of Postgraduate Studies. If this recommendation is confirmed by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies, you will not be permitted to continue as a registered student and your registration will be terminated.

The Project Approval Panel should not normally recommend that registration is terminated without having previously provided you with a Project Approval re-assessment opportunity.

70. The University requires that you take responsibility for listening to, understanding, and accepting feedback from your supervisory team and the Project Approval Panel.

71. The University requires that you take responsibility for keeping your research project on track so that it is completed within the normal timescale prescribed by your programme and candidature.

Declaration of Personal Interest

72. The University acknowledges the professional and ethical responsibility to protect the interests of our students, and that all relationships with them must feature trust, confidence and equal treatment. The University **does not accept** close personal or intimate relationships between colleagues and students where there is direct supervision. All members of staff are required to declare any personal relationships with a student they are asked to supervise or are already supervising to their line manager, who will consider alternative arrangements to reduce or eliminate the potential conflicts of interest arising. *(Further information is available in the [Personal Relationships at Work Policy](#))*

73. The University requires that all research supervisors adhere to this Code of Practice. Where a supervisor does not adhere to this Code of Practice, the Dean of Postgraduate Studies in consultation with the Head of Academic Unit has the power to remove the member of staff from the list of approved research supervisors and make alternative arrangements for your supervision. Where the Dean of Postgraduate Studies and Head of Academic Unit are unable to resolve the supervision, the PVC of the Faculty will be consulted on the matter.

Third Parties

74. This guidance applies where a third party such as a professional copy editor or a proof-reading company has been employed to provide assistance, or where you receive help from other parties such as fellow students. Where a professional third party or proof-reading software has been employed to assist the student, you should make this clear in the thesis and include a statement indicating the nature of the contribution and by whom.

75. A third party may provide:

- Assistance with spelling, punctuation and grammar;
- Improve the format or layout of the work including editing sentences and paragraphs.

76. Third parties must not make significant adjustments to the work, and this includes:

- Changing, clarifying or developing the argument of the thesis;
- Adding to the references used;
- Correcting factual information;
- Translating significant amounts of work that are integral to the thesis;
- Significantly reducing the length or substantially altering the organisation of the thesis.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

77. The University requires you to openly and transparently acknowledge how, why and when AI has been used to inform or support the completion of any submitted work during your research degree studies. You must use your own words when submitting work and should not deliberately submit AI

generated text as your own. Doing so will be considered academic misconduct and should be dealt with through our established Academic Misconduct procedure.

78. If there is a suspicion that a student has submitted work that is not their own, the reason for that suspicion should be clearly articulated and addressed with the student at a local level. Colleagues should NOT submit student work through any AI text detection tools themselves. Further information is available here.

Progression and Monitoring

79. The University requires that your progress should be reviewed annually by an Impartial Annual Progress Review Panel, normally the same (or equivalent) panel that approved your research project and the supervisory arrangements.

80. The University requires that you submit an annual progress report on your research project to an impartial Annual Progress Review Panel, until submission of your thesis for examination. In addition, you may be asked to provide one or more of the following as specified by your Academic Unit/Faculty;

- submission of a piece of work/lab book;
- give a presentation on their research;
- undergo a viva or interview;
- evidence of research training.

Academic Units will ensure that the progression requirements for full-time and part-time students are clearly specified and made available to students, supervisory teams, and Annual Progress Review Panel members.

81. The University requires that your supervisory team should formally monitor your progress on your research programme through annual reports to the Annual Progress Review Panel, on the PGR CoP system. This Annual Progress Review applies to both full-time and part-time students. Where appropriate, reports on progress should be made to sponsors and copied to the Graduate School.

82. However, if your supervisory team have concerns about progress, at any point during your programme, they should inform you in writing prior to a meeting. At the meeting, the written comments of the team, including any additional work that the supervisors feel is required, should be discussed with you, and be agreed along with a review date. If progress continues to be unsatisfactory, you should be informed in writing that this will be referred to the Annual Progress Review Panel for consideration. The letter should be copied to the Graduate School.

83. When appointing panel members, Academic Units should give consideration to the nature of the project, particularly for interdisciplinary projects, as well to the composition of the panel from an EDI perspective, where possible.

84. It is the responsibility of any impartial panel member to declare if they have a conflict of interest such as a personal or professional relationship with you, a member of your supervisory team or alternative Examiner. The Academic Unit should consider any perceived conflict of interests when appointing impartial panel members. The Dean of Postgraduate Studies has the final decision on panel members, if any concerns are raised.

85. Annual Progress Review Panels should consider the evidence, including annual reports submitted by supervisory teams, and determine whether satisfactory progress is being made and this progress indicates that the research project will meet the standards for the award and be completed by the maximum candidature date for the programme.

86. If these criteria are met, the Annual Progress Review Panel should recommend that registration should be continued.

87. If these criteria are not met, the Annual Progress Review Panel should indicate what you, and where appropriate your supervisory team, must do to put the research project back on track. It should set a date for further review within a period prescribed by the Faculty, normally within two months (four months if you are a part-time student).

88. Annual Progress Review Panels should complete a report, which will be approved by the Dean of

Postgraduate Studies, which will then be shared with you and your supervisory team, on the PGR CoP system. In the event of the Annual Progress Review Panel being unable to make a recommendation to progress, you and your supervisory team should determine an action plan to ensure that your progress and your research project will meet the standards of the award by the date set for further review.

89. If necessary, the Annual Progress Review Panel should re-convene on the date set and consider whether you have responded to the concerns raised and whether your progress is such that the research project will meet the standards for the award and be completed by the maximum candidature date for the programme. Where the evidence has demonstrated this, the Annual Progress Review Panel should make a recommendation to progress.

90. Where the evidence does not demonstrate that the research project will meet the standards for the award, the Annual Progress Review Panel's recommendation will depend upon its judgement of the reasons for this, in terms of your potential to achieve these standards and the adequacy and appropriateness of your supervisory arrangements. Any reassessment should be recorded in the PGR CoP system.

91. Where the Annual Progress Review Panel is not satisfied that the supervisory arrangements are adequate and appropriate, but considers that you would otherwise be able to achieve the standards of the award, it may seek the approval of the Head of Academic Unit to make a recommendation to the Dean of Postgraduate Studies for the replacement of all or part of the supervisory team.

92. Where the Annual Progress Review Panel is satisfied that the supervisory arrangements are adequate and appropriate but considers that you are unlikely to be able to achieve the standards for the award, the Annual Progress Review Panel may recommend that you be registered for a lower degree where appropriate and where you are likely to be able to achieve the standards.

93. Where the Annual Progress Review Panel considers that you cannot meet the standards for either a Doctoral or a Master of Philosophy award, they may recommend that your registration be terminated.

94. Although the final decision with respect to any recommendation made by the Academic Unit is taken by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies, an Academic Unit may provide you with provisional feedback after the Annual Progress Review Panel has met.

Appointment of Examiners

95. The regulations of the University require that all research degrees are examined by two examiners, at least one of whom must be external. For staff candidates, the examination shall normally be conducted by two External Examiners, although for junior members of staff, at the discretion of the Dean of Postgraduate Studies, one External and one Internal Examiner may be appointed.

96. All Examiners should be willing to complete the process of examination normally within ten weeks of submission of the thesis.

97. All Examiners will be nominated by your Supervisory Team, on behalf of the Head of Academic Unit and should take account of points 96 to 100. You will have the opportunity to comment on the proposed Examiners. If you believe there is a conflict of interest it should be drawn to the attention of your Supervisory Team, Head of Academic Unit or Graduate School, as soon as possible. Examiner appointments will only be reviewed if it is clear there may be bias or prejudice by an Examiner.

External Examiners

98. External Examiners are a recognised authority in their field and provide an important external oversight of the examination process. It is recommended that External Examiners should normally be appointed from research-intensive universities, to ensure standards and consistency across all Faculties.

External Examiners MUST:

- Have significant experience and knowledge of research in the subject area within which the candidate is working.
- Be independent and have no obvious conflict of interest.
- Have a research degree or equivalent academic or professional experience.
- Be research active and will normally have published in recognised outlets (or other equivalent

research activity) in the discipline in the last two years. (The information provided to support the appointment should clearly detail this.)

- Have a clear understanding of the examination process normally based on experience of examining research degrees at other institutions.

External Examiners MUST NOT:

- Be a former member of Newcastle University or a former postgraduate unless more than five years have elapsed since that person left the University.
- Be appointed on a regular basis such that their familiarity with the Academic Unit might influence their judgment. Normally an External Examiner should not be appointed more than once during a 12-month period, while recognising that there be an academic reason for a subsequent appointment within a 12-month period. Such appointments would be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies.
- Have a close relationship with you or a member of your supervisory team e.g., have published with or worked directly with them to a significant degree within the last five years.
- Be an honorary member of Newcastle University.
- Normally be a retired member of staff from another University unless they demonstrably meet all the criteria outlined above.

Internal Examiners

99. The Internal Examiner is normally responsible for ensuring that the University's examination practices are followed and that the Joint Report Form is forwarded to the Graduate School.

To be eligible, Internal Examiners MUST:

- Have a contract of employment at Newcastle University and be registered on the approved list of supervisors held by the Graduate School.
- Have expertise in the broad field of the thesis under examination.
- Be familiar with the University procedures for the examination of research degrees. (*Where examiners have not conducted an examination at Newcastle they must be briefed by the Academic Unit and an Independent Chair may be appointed. However, where a proposed Internal Examiner has attended the 'Assessing Research Degree's workshop, the requirements for an Independent Chair may be waived.*)

The Dean of Postgraduate of Research may consider appointing an Emeritus member of staff as an Internal Examiner, where the Emeritus member of staff is an expert in their field and continues to be research active and an expert in their field. There would be an expectation that the Emeritus member would be involved in any appeal/complaint arising from the examination process, in the same way as any other Internal Examiner.

Internal Examiners MUST NOT:

- Have had any direct involvement with the research project under examination.
- Be members of the supervisory team that have supported your work .
- Be a postgraduate student, unless the proposed Examiner is a colleague who is undertaking a postgraduate degree under staff candidature regulations.
- Be a visiting member of Newcastle University.

Independent Chair

100. An Independent Chair makes sure the University's examination of research degrees procedures are followed. They take no part in the assessment process but ensure that the examination process is conducted fairly and equitably. Graduate Schools maintain a list of approved Independent Chairs who can be appointed by Deans of Postgraduate Research, when required.

101. The Independent Chair will be present for the duration of the oral examination, normally also including the pre-meeting and post oral discussions between examiners. An Independent Chair will not be required to take notes of the meeting for the External Examiners but will be required to provide a

summary report on proceedings to the Graduate School following the oral examination.

An Independent Chair **MUST** be appointed in the following circumstances:

- Where two External Examiners are appointed.
- Where the Internal Examiner has no previous experience of examining a research degree.

An Independent Chair **MAY** be appointed in the following circumstances:

- Where the Examiners of the thesis require the assistance of an independent authority to conduct the examination process.
- Where the Internal Examiner has no previous experience of examining research degrees at Newcastle University. (*Where a proposed Internal Examiner has attended the 'Assessing Research Degree's workshop, the requirements for an Independent Chair may be waived.*)
- When the Dean of Postgraduate Studies deems an independent authority is needed to ensure the examination process is conducted fairly.
- Where you have requested this on medical/personal/cultural grounds.

An Independent Chair shall:

- Normally be an academic member of staff at the University, normally at Senior Lecturer / Reader level or above.
- Be familiar with Newcastle University examination processes for research degrees.
- Have substantial experience of postgraduate research and examination.

An Independent Chair **MUST NOT**:

- Be a member of the supervisory team or have played any part in the research under examination.
- Normally be from your or your supervisory team's subject area.

Responsibilities and Conflicts of Interest

102. It is the responsibility of the proposed External or Internal Examiners to declare if they have a conflict of interest such as a personal or professional relationship with you, a member of your supervisory team or co-Examiner. This should include an acknowledgement of all papers co-authored between the supervisors and proposed external examiner in the last five years, with a clear factual statement of any relationship to the thesis, e.g. if the work would be expected to be cited in the thesis.

103. It is the role of the Dean of Postgraduate Studies to comment critically on the proposed Examiners and if there is a perceived conflict of interests, the Dean of Postgraduate Studies has the final decision in the appointment of Examiners.

104. Once the Examiners have been appointed it is the responsibility of the supervisory team to:

- Ensure that the administrative arrangements for the oral examination are in place
- Communicate to the Graduate School any health or personal circumstances that may affect the conduct of the oral examination.

Personal Extenuating Circumstances

105. The University has established procedures for dealing with personal extenuating circumstances that may affect you throughout the duration of your studies. You can apply for an interruption of studies, a change of candidature or an extension to your thesis submission deadline, via the PGR CoP system, if personal circumstances are impacting on your studies.

106. Following submission of your thesis, if you are aware of any circumstances that may stop you from attending the oral examination, these should be brought to the attention of your supervisory team and the Graduate School, to determine if it is necessary to delay the oral examination.

107. You should also contact your supervisory team and the Graduate School if there are personal circumstances that you believe could impact on your performance at the oral examination. This information will then be provided to the Dean of Postgraduate Studies and your Examiners, in advance of the oral examination, to determine if any reasonable adjustments are required.

108. Irrespective of any personal circumstances, your examiners will be expected to assess you against the assessment criteria for your relevant research degree. However, examiners might wish to take

personal circumstances into account when considering the recommendations open to them.

109. By attending an oral examination, you are declaring that you are fit to attend the examination, and as such, it is unlikely that you would be able to submit a later claim that your performance was affected by personal circumstances.

Examination

110. The University requires that supervisory teams should be responsible for the nomination of examiners for research degrees, in accordance with the criteria for appointment set out above, on behalf of the Head of Academic Unit. Supervisory teams should provide you with an opportunity to comment on the proposed Examiners.

111. Examiner nominations should be made on the PGR CoP system to the Dean of Postgraduate Studies who should check that the examiners meet the requirements set out above and, if so, approve them on behalf of Senate.

112. Once Examiner nominations have been approved, the Graduate School will send a letter of appointment along with relevant information including the University's Handbook for Examiners of Research Degrees which contains information on the institutional assessment criteria for the award.

113. Where an Independent Chair is required, the Graduate School will consult the list of approved Independent Chairs and provide details of the Independent Chair to the examiners, supervisors and candidate.

114. The supervisory team should agree in writing the date, time and place of the oral examination with you, your examiners, and where appropriate the Independent Chair and should then notify the Graduate School.

115. Your supervisory team should ask you whether or not you wish to have a member of your supervisory team present in the oral examination as a non-contributing observer (unless asked to contribute by the Chair). If not present, the supervisory team should be available for consultation during the oral examination. When agreeing the date for the oral examination, the supervisory team should ensure that there is sufficient time to allow for the thesis to be sent to and fully considered by the examiners.

116. Under no circumstances should the arrangements for the oral examination be delegated to you.

117. There should normally be no discussion about the oral examination itself (apart from agreeing the date), between the supervisory team and the examiners in advance of the oral examination.

118. There should also normally be no discussion about the oral examination between you and your examiners prior to the oral examination. Following the oral examination there should continue to be no direct contact between you and your examiners. If you require clarification on points raised by the examiners, this clarification should be sought via your supervisory team.

119. The University requires the supervisory team to advise you on preparation for the oral examination and where practical to offer you at least one practice session.

120. The University requires that, prior to the oral examination, examiners make preliminary written independent reports on the thesis, which should be sent to the Graduate School.

121. The University requires that examiners should not consult with each other before both independent preliminary reports have been submitted to the Graduate School, normally two weeks in advance of the oral examination.

122. The University requires that oral examinations are normally chaired by the Internal Examiner and has overall responsibility for conducting the oral examination, in accordance with the procedures set out in the Handbook for Examiners of Research Degrees. However, the examiners should discuss and agree the chairing arrangements during their pre-meeting, in advance of the start of the oral examination. In an oral examination where an Independent Chair is appointed, it will be the Independent Chair who will chair the oral examination.

123. Following the oral examination, the University requires that examiners write a joint report (except

in cases where they disagree when they should write separate reports) and make an appropriate recommendation in respect of the award. Where the recommendation is re-submission, the report should include a detailed/comprehensive statement of the work to be done to achieve the award within the period allowed under the University's regulations.

124. As well as reporting on you and your thesis, examiners should be requested to provide comments on the broader issues of the research training skills and the research environment.

125. The examiners' joint report should be sent to the Graduate School for approval by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies. The Graduate School will send copies of the final joint report, along with the statement of any required corrections/revisions, to you, your supervisory team and the Head of Academic Unit and Director of Postgraduate Studies.

Criteria for the Doctorate

126. Doctoral degrees at Newcastle University meet in full the doctoral qualification descriptor contained in [The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies](#), and are aligned with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

Doctoral degrees are awarded to candidates who demonstrate:

- The ability to create and interpret new knowledge through original research and advanced scholarship;
- A systematic understanding of an existing body of knowledge that is at the forefront of an academic field;
- The ability to explore critically, evaluate and test their ideas, and those of others, and to relate them to a wider body of knowledge;
- A good understanding of the research techniques, methods or approaches adopted and applied in a field of enquiry;
- The ability to conceive and implement a project which demonstrates an understanding of how to conduct research at the forefront of a field;
- An ability to produce research material worthy of publication, performance or exhibition.

Criteria for the MPhil Programme

127. The Degree of Master of Philosophy (MPhil) is awarded to candidates displaying convincing evidence of the capacity to pursue research and scholarship and represent original work. On successful completion of an MPhil candidates will have attained Level 7, as defined in [The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies](#).

For the award of an MPhil degree the University requires:

- A systematic understanding of knowledge that is informed by work at the forefront of an academic field;
- An ability to evaluate and critically appraise current research and advanced scholarship, and some evidence of originality in the application of this work;
- An understanding and critical appreciation of the research techniques, methods or approaches adopted and applied in a field of enquiry;
- An ability to conceive and implement a research project, which demonstrates an understanding of how to conduct research in a field.

Normally an MPhil thesis will be more focused or limited in scope than a Doctoral degree. A Doctoral degree will demonstrate greater depth of critical enquiry than the MPhil. Relative to the Doctoral degree, the MPhil will have less emphasis on original work and it need not be worthy of publication, performance or exhibition.

All Research Degrees

128. For all research degrees, the University requires that work presented for examination should be:

129. *Authentic*: The submission should be your own work and not be plagiarised from the work of others, published or unpublished, in the public domain or not. All sources used should be appropriately acknowledged using a recognised form of referencing.

130. *Scholarly*: The thesis should conform to the normal canons of scholarship, studying a topic in-depth, and displaying critical discrimination and a sense of proportion in evaluating evidence and the opinion of others. In written work sources should be cited accurately, consistently, and correctly in the text and in the bibliography.

131. *Professional*: The thesis should demonstrate you have acquired the skills of a professional researcher capable of conducting research in accordance with the ethical practices of their field, and that you possess a good understanding of your role in the wider research process. You should also demonstrate the ability to exercise personal responsibility and initiative in complex and unpredictable professional research environments.

132. *Well-structured, written, and presented*: The thesis should demonstrate skill in writing and presenting research similar to scholarly work in your field. A written thesis should be clearly structured and orderly in arrangement, and well-written and presented. Similarly, any composition, exhibition, artefact(s), or other products of practice arising from the research should be arranged and presented in an orderly and coherent way.

Covid-19 Impact Statement

133. Where your thesis has changed from what was originally intended due to Covid-19, you may include a Covid-19 Impact Statement to explain to your Examiners the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on your research project. Examiners will be expected to assess you against the assessment criteria for the relevant research degree. However, examiners should take the circumstances as detailed in your Covid-19 Impact Statement into account when considering the recommendations open to them. Further information is available in the [Covid -19 Impact Statement Guidance](#)

Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework

134. All research programmes are reviewed under the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework, which provides an opportunity to reflect on current practice in relation to Research Degree Programmes and provides a forum to consider the enhancement of the student experience through the sharing of good practice and feedback from external sources and students.

135. The process is conducted in two ways; firstly, an Annual Review of Research Degree Programmes is undertaken through an Annual Check-in report, which provides Academic Units with a formal opportunity to monitor the effectiveness of research degree provision focussing on aspects of this Code of Practice.

136. The Annual Check-In reports are supplemented by Review Visits to Academic Units; within each Faculty normally at least one Academic Unit is visited each Academic Year. The Review Visits are undertaken by a small panel who explore in more detail the evidence provided by the annual review process to evaluate its efficacy, ask questions of the Academic Unit under review and meet students.

137. The results of the Annual Review and the Review Visits are reported annually by Faculty Postgraduate Research Committees to the Postgraduate Research Sub-Committee of the University Education Committee/University Research and Innovation Committee.

138. The [Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework](#) details the full policy and process and is applicable to all elements of research programmes, including any taught components.

Feedback Mechanisms

139. The University requires that confidential mechanisms are established for research students to feedback on the quality of their learning experiences. Such mechanisms should include: questionnaires focused on recruitment, admission and induction procedures; questionnaire evaluations of the researcher development programme; survey questionnaires, focus groups or interviews covering the totality of the learning experience.

140. Any feedback received from other stakeholders, including supervisory teams, review panels, examiners, funders, collaborative organisations, employers and alumni should also be reviewed.

141. Feedback from these should be considered by Faculty Postgraduate Research Committees and, where appropriate, acted upon.

Complaints and Resolution

142. The University has established procedures for complaints about a service, member of staff, or another student. A complaint may be made by any student and details are set out in the [Complaints and Resolution Procedure](#).

143. The University provides a clear three-stage procedure for students to complain about the level of service or treatment which may have fallen short of what might reasonably be expected. At Level 1 (informal stage for resolution), complainants are expected to make every effort to resolve informally a problem with the individual(s) concerned or to seek help/advice in writing from the complainant's tutor/supervisor/Head of School, or appropriate Head of Service.

144. Only when the steps taken under Level 1 of the procedure have failed, or when the complainant considers that their complaint has not been resolved may Level 2 of the procedure be invoked by submission of the Complaints Form, together with full details of the complaint and any supporting evidence.

145. Level 3 is the formal review of the Level 2 outcome, where the complainant requests a review of the outcome of their complaint at the Level 2 stage.

Academic Appeals and Query

146. The University has established procedures for appeal against a recommendation by a progression panel and examiners of research degrees. Details are set out in the [Academic Appeals and Query procedure](#) available at:

147. The University provides a clear three-stage procedure for students making Academic Queries and Appeals requesting reconsideration of Board of Examiners/ Personal Extenuating Circumstances (PEC) and/or Degree Programme Director (DPD) / Progress Decisions.

148. Level 1 is the informal stage for querying academic decisions. Appellants are expected to make every effort to raise their assessment/progress query, in writing, with the School/Faculty directly concerned in the first instance. Graduate School Managers are the nominated contact for Research Degree programmes/students at Level 1.

149. Only when the steps taken under Level 1 of the procedure have failed, or when the Appellant considers that their query has not been resolved, may Level 2 of the Academic Queries & Appeals Procedure be invoked by submission of the Academic Appeal Form together with full details of the formal appeal and any supporting evidence.

150. Level 3 is the formal review of the Level 2 outcome, where the Appellant requests a review of the outcome of their academic appeal at the Level 2 stage.

ADDENDUM TO THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR RESEARCH MASTERS' DEGREE PROGRAMMES

Introduction

i. The purpose of this Addendum to the Code of Practice is to set out the University's standards for its research masters' programmes. This refers in particular to MLitt, MRes, as well as some MMus and LLM programmes

ii. This addendum to the Code of Practice is supplementary to aid staff in interpretation for the University's research masters' programmes and should be read in conjunction with the full Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes.

Selection of Research Students

iii. The University requires that there should be rigorous selection policies and procedures for Postgraduate Admissions and, where appropriate, Academic Unit or subject levels.

iv. The University requires that selection procedures should be rigorous and involve the following;

- involve at least the Degree Programme Director or PGR Director in the selection process, who will act on behalf of the Head of Academic Unit to approve the offer of a place.
- interviewing applicants, where it is deemed appropriate and possible.

- taking up two references and, if one or more of these is not available at the time of offer, making the latter conditional upon the receipt of satisfactory references.

Learning Agreements

v. You need to have received, understood, and accepted the expectations of your research programme. This should be set out in a formal Learning Agreement, which should be signed by you and by the Research Dissertation Supervisor or Degree Programme Director on behalf of the University. Your Academic Unit will advise you on the timescale and the process for completing your Learning Agreement.

The Development of Relevant Knowledge and Skills

vi. The University requires the research programme should offer you the opportunity to develop a relevant range of research knowledge and skills, appropriate to the programme.

Research Students

vii. It is required that you maintain regular attendance on the programme. During the research project/dissertation stage, if you are a full-time student you should have regular structured interactions and meet with your allocated supervisor at least monthly. The University requires that you should record and confirm the outcomes of meetings, normally on NU Reflect.

Supervisory Arrangements

viii. The University requires that individual supervisors are appointed for the research project/dissertation element of the programme. This should normally be undertaken by a member of academic staff, who should be demonstrably research active and on the approved research supervisors' list for the Academic Unit or faculty. You should always have a second named person acting as advisor, either an additional disciplinary expert or the Degree Programme Director or School Director of Postgraduate Studies.

The Development and Approval of Research Project Proposals

ix. Research project/ dissertation proposals should be developed prior to the commencement of the research element of the programme and approved by the Degree Programme Director or PGR Director in conjunction with the research dissertation supervisor.

x. The University requires the Degree Programme Director to evaluate research proposals against the criteria;

- that the project has clear aims and objectives;
- that you have (or can acquire) the knowledge, skills, and aptitudes to complete the project successfully;
- that the proposed supervisor has, or will be able to acquire, the skills, knowledge and aptitudes necessary to supervise the project to a successful conclusion;
- that the project is suitable for the programme of study and for the award;
- that it can be completed within the timescale for the programme;
- that sufficient resources will be available to complete the project.

Progression and Monitoring

xi. The University requires that the Degree Programme Director or PGR Director and supervisor should formally monitor you progress on your research masters' programme. Formal monitoring will include review of progress following any taught components of the programme.

xii. However, if at any point during the programme, the Degree Programme Director, PGR Director or supervisor has concerns about your progress, they should inform you in writing prior to a meeting. At the meeting, the written comments of the team should be discussed with you, and a plan of action should be agreed along with a review date. If progress continues to be unsatisfactory, you should be informed in writing of the reasons and of the possible consequences in terms of being unable to progress, suspension, or termination of registration. The letter should be copied to the Graduate School.

xiii. The University requires that your progress should be formally reviewed after the taught element

of the programme.

Examination

- xiv. The regulations of the University require that all research degree projects/ dissertations are examined by two examiners, one internal and one external. For staff candidates, the examination shall normally be conducted by two external examiners for each candidate, although for junior members of staff, at the discretion of the Dean of Postgraduate Studies, one external and one internal may be appointed.
- xv. The University requires that examiners should be demonstrably research-active in relevant fields. Examiners should be independent of the project and otherwise meet the criteria set out in the criteria for appointment of examiners set out for research degrees above. Research Dissertation Supervisors are explicitly excluded from acting as examiners for the research project/ dissertation.
- xvi. The University requires that the Head of Academic Unit or Degree Programme Director should be responsible for the nomination of examiners for the research project/dissertation and should take account of points 95 to 99.
- xvii. Nominations of examiners should be made on the PGR CoP system, to the relevant Dean of Postgraduate Studies, who should check that the examiners meet the requirements set out above and, if so, approve them on behalf of Senate.
- xviii. Once nominations have been approved, examiners should be sent a letter of appointment and relevant information including assessment criteria for the award and profile of marks from the modules studied prior to the research project/dissertation.
- xix. Following assessment of the research project/dissertation the examiners should write separate reports and make an appropriate recommendation in respect of the award. Where the recommendation is re-submission, the report should include a statement of the work to be done to achieve the award within the period allowed under the University's regulations.
- xx. If the examiners determine that an oral examination is required, this should normally be chaired by the internal examiner and conducted in accordance with the procedures set out in the Handbook for Examiners of Research Degrees.